

GUY DELISLE
SHENZHEN
A TRAVELOGUE FROM CHINA





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MONTREAL

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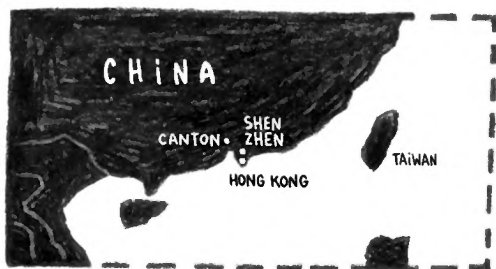
1. Shenzhen (Guangdong Sheng, China : East)--Fiction. 2. Canadian wit and humor,
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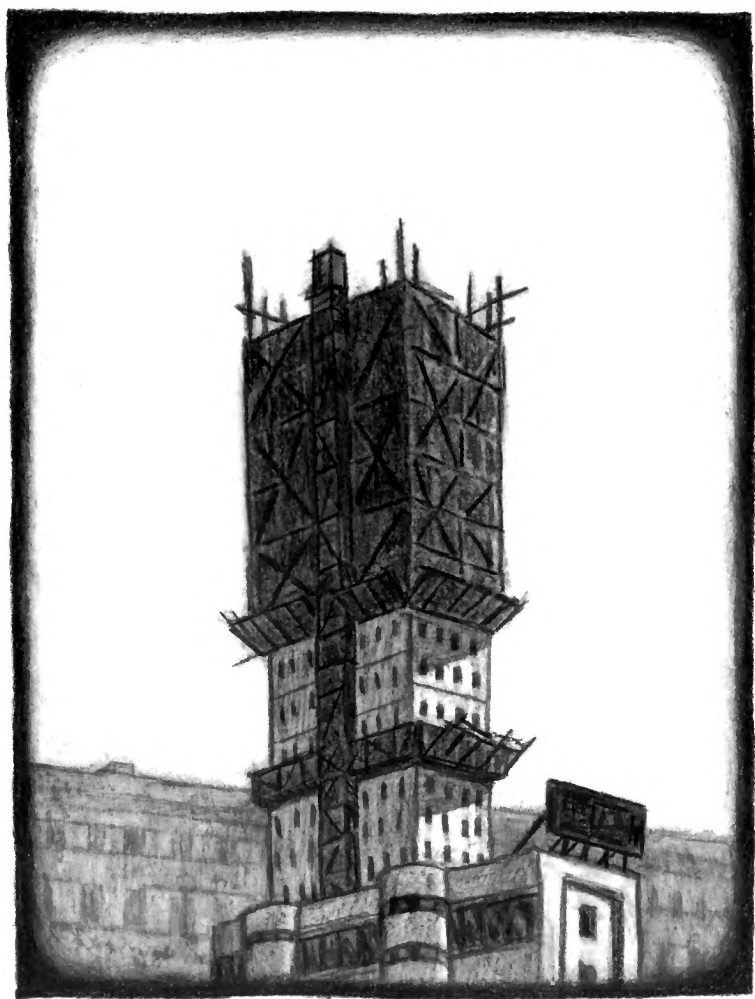
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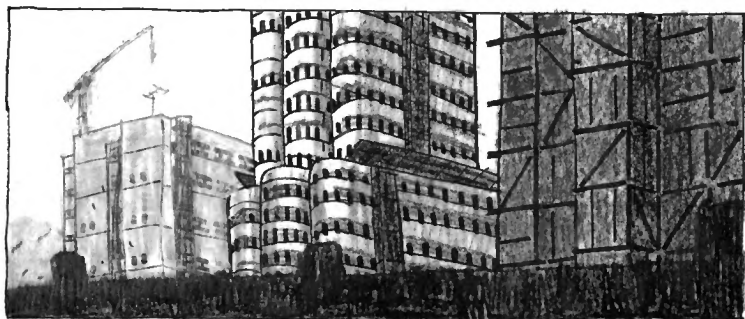
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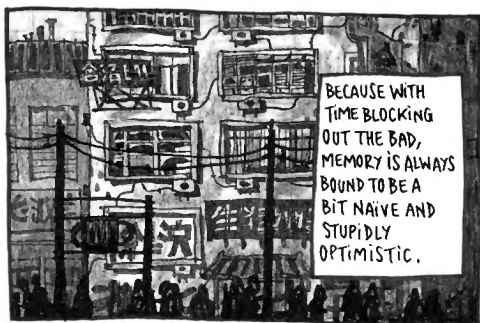




I REDISCOVER WHAT I'D FORGOTTEN: THE SMELLS, THE NOISE, THE CROWDS, THE DIRT EVERYWHERE.



I REALIZE THAT I'D REMEMBERED ONLY THE GOOD THINGS... HOW EXOTIC IT WAS...





IN FACT, THERE IS ONLY ONE KIND OF HOTEL ROOM IN CHINA...



Zong Shan Hotel,
Nanjing.



Great Wall Hotel,
Shenzhen.



Holiday Inn,
Canton.



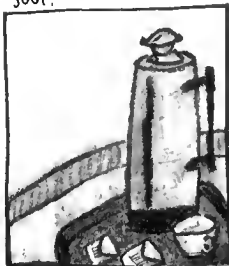
Oriental Regent,
Shanghai.



Victoria Hotel
Canton.



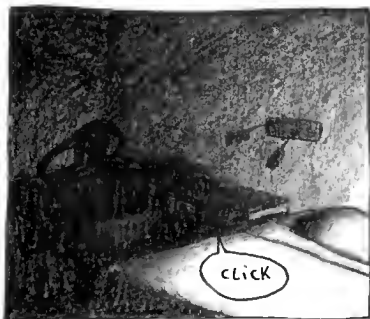
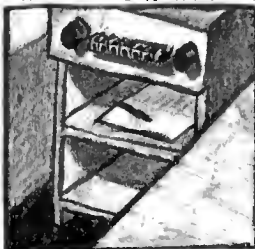
HOT WATER FOR TEA OR
SOUP.



THE SPOUT IS BADLY
DESIGNED, SO WATER
DRIBBLES EVERYWHERE.



AND ALWAYS, A PANEL OF BUT-
TONS BETWEEN THE TWO BEDS TO
CONTROL YOUR LITTLE UNIVERSE.



ON THE FIRST MORNING, I HAVE TO GET TO THE STUDIO TO MEET THE DIRECTOR I'LL BE REPLACING.



I ORDER A COFFEE AT THE HOTEL BAR.
\$ 3.50...



I ASK FOR A DOUBLE TO GET OVER THE JET LAG.



AFTER 8 MONTHS, THE DIRECTOR HAS PRETTY MUCH HAD IT. HE CAN'T WAIT TO CLEAR OUT.

JESUS H. CHRIST!
I'VE BEEN TELLING THEM FROM THE START NOT TO MOVE THE PUPIL WHEN THEY DO BLINKS!

AND THE ANIMATION IS GETTING WORSE BY THE DAY. THE BEST GUYS TOOK OFF TO A STUDIO IN CANTON.

THEY'RE GONNA REDO THIS!

THIS STUDIO IS A FRIGGIN' HOLE!

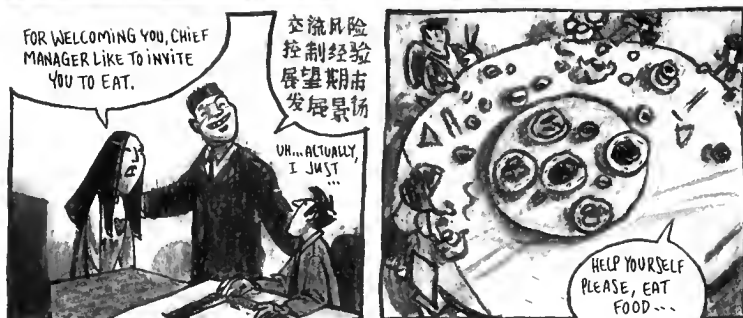
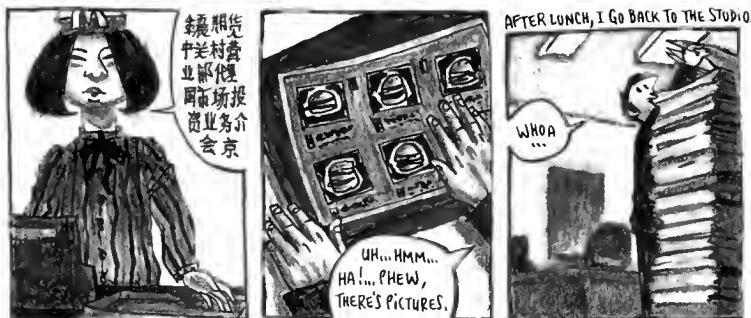
AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT THE BOSS...

EVE-RY SEQUENCE HAS GOTTA BE REDONE 2 OR 3 TIMES

THE TRANSLATOR IS DEPRESSING AS ALL HELL, PLUS SHE DOESN'T KNOW A THING ABOUT ANIMATION...

AND THE NEW LAYOUTS FROM CANADA ARE TOTAL CRAP...

SEE THIS? IT SUCKS!





FOR A MODERN CITY NEXT TO HONG KONG, SHENZHEN HAS VERY FEW BILINGUAL CHINESE...

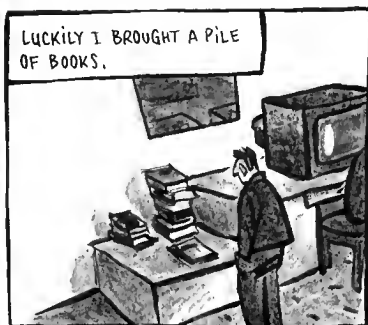


THERE'S NO UNIVERSITY OR CAFÉ FOR ME TO MEET YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE WEST.



PEOPLE COME HERE TO DO BUSINESS. AFTER A DAY OR TWO OF MEETINGS, THEY HEAD BACK TO HONG KONG.





Until then,
keep your chin up,
forget your sensitivities
and observe people,
especially those nearest you.
You'll enjoy it.
I guarantee that you're in
for a pleasant surprise.

from the novel *Carrot Top*
by Jules Renard



ONE DAY OVER LUNCH, I TRY TO
GET TO KNOW MY TRANSLATOR.



AFTER THE MEAL, SHE COVERS
HER MOUTH WITH ONE HAND WHILE
USING HER
TOOTHPICK.



SHE DIDN'T ASK A SINGLE QUESTION ALL THROUGH THE MEAL. I WAS MORE INQUISITIVE AND TRIED TO LIVE THINGS UP.



THE FIRST FEW
NIGHTS, I
CAN'T SLEEP.



ACROSS THE WAY,
PEOPLE SLAVE
THROUGH THE
NIGHT, SQUAT-
TING OVER
WASHBASINS.

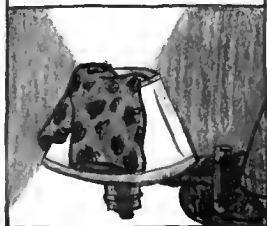


WEEKS LATER, I REALIZE IT'S THE HOTEL
LAUNDRY SERVICE.



APPARENTLY THE MACHINES
OUT BACK ARE DECORATION.

HAVING A PAIR OF BOXERS
WASHED COSTS AS MUCH AS A
MEAL IN THE STREET.



HOTEL FOOD IS MORE EXPENSIVE, OF COURSE, BUT YOU GET SERVICE (TOO MUCH FOR MY TASTE).
IN GENERAL, THE MORE WAITRESSES THERE ARE, THE CLASSIER THE PLACE.



LIKE
STARS IN A
MICHELIN
GUIDE.

AFTER EVERY SIP, MY CUP GETS A REFILL. THE CONSTANT ATTENTION IS DISTRACTING AT FIRST, BUT YOU LEARN TO IGNORE IT. BECOMING BOURGEOIS MUST START LIKE THIS.



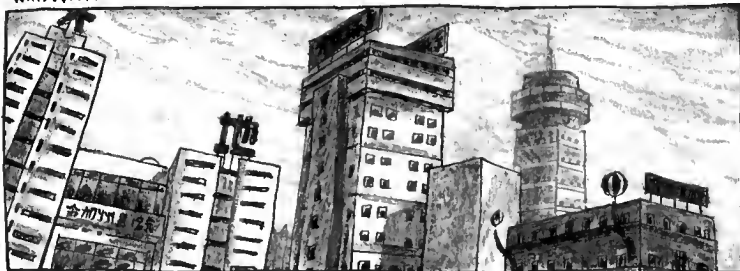
Hmm...
THE TEA
ISN'T BAD...
OOLONG,
IF I'M
NOT
MISTAKEN



HOW
DO YOU
DO?

EXCEPT THE GUY AT THE RESTROOM DOOR. I NEVER DID GET USED TO HIM.

ON MY WAY DOWNTOWN TO THE BANK, I NOTICE A STRANGE BUILDING, SOME 15 STORIES HIGH WITH NO WINDOWS. A LARGE GRAY CONCRETE SLAB. BIZARRE.



DURING MY STAY, I LOOKED FOR THE STRANGE CUBE A FEW TIMES TO PHOTOGRAPH IT, BUT I NEVER FOUND IT AGAIN... IT HAD VANISHED.



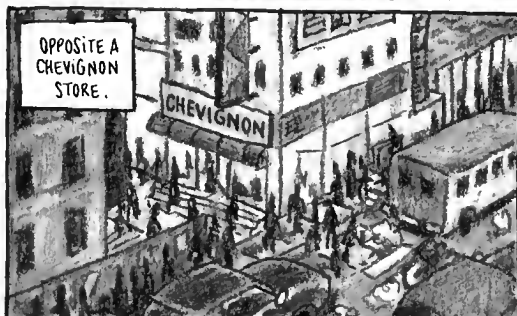
IN THE CITY STREETS, CRIPPLES BEG BY KNOCKING THEIR FOREHEADS ON THE GROUND.



ACTUALLY, THEY'RE FAKING. THEY STOP BEFORE HITTING THE PAVEMENT, BUT WITH THEIR LONG HAIR YOU CAN'T TELL.



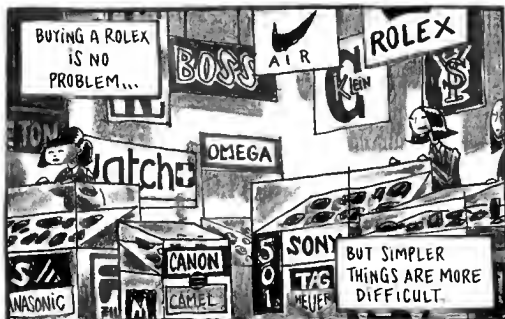
IF THEY WERE HITTING THE GROUND, YOU'D HEAR SOMETHING... BUT YOU DON'T.



OPPOSITE A CHEVIGNON STORE.

SHOPPING IS THE MAIN PASTIME HERE. IN FACT, IT'S THE ONLY PASTIME.

STRANGELY ENOUGH, ALL YOU SEE ARE BRAND NAMES, AND THEY'RE NOT CHEAPER HERE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.



BUYING A ROLEX IS NO PROBLEM...

BOSS

AIR

NIKE

ROLEX

Y&S

OMEGA

SONY

T&G

HEUER

CANON

CAMEL

BUT SIMPLER THINGS ARE MORE DIFFICULT.

IT TOOK ME THREE DAYS TO FIND A STORE SELLING KITCHEN KNIVES SO I COULD CUT MY APPLES AT THE HOTEL.



AT THE BANK

STANDING IN LINE IS NOT A CLEAR CONCEPT IN CHINA. LEAVE A SPACE AND IT'S LIKELY TO BE FILLED.



EVEN THE SMALLEST SPACE.





FOR THE OPENING OF A KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN OUTLET, YOUNG UNIFORMED EMPLOYEES DO A LITTLE PROMOTIONAL DANCE NUMBER THAT HAS A MILITARY FEEL TO IT.



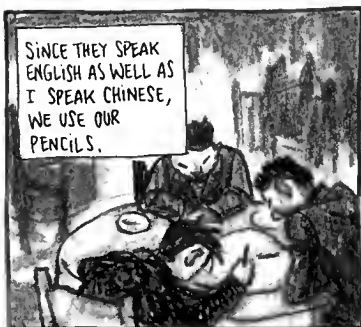
ANOTHER PLOY TO ATTRACT CLIENTS: LOUDSPEAKERS.



THAT EVENING, THE STUDIO'S ANIMATION DIRECTOR AND HIS BROTHER INVITE ME TO THE HARD ROCK CAFE FOR WESTERN FOOD.



SINCE THEY SPEAK ENGLISH AS WELL AS I SPEAK CHINESE, WE USE OUR PENCILS.



WHERE I'M FROM:
"YCHANA DA"



CANTON?



OH, THAT'S IT!



I SEE

CANTONA?



YUP, IT'S 'CAN-TO-NA', THEY'RE SOCCER FANS AND THEY WANT TO TALK WORLD CUP.



I ADD A SHADOW.



I TREAT MY TOOTHACHE
WITH DENTAL FLOSS LEFT
BEHIND BY THE LAST
DIRECTOR. AN ESSENTIALLY
NORTH AMERICAN PRACTICE,
IT SHOULD SAVE ME FROM
REPEATING THE LAST TRIP'S
HARROWING VISIT TO THE
DENTIST.



WHY SHOULDN'T I
TRUST A CHINESE
DENTIST?



I THOUGHT BACK THEN...

I'D HAD THE GREAT IDEA OF
GETTING MY WISDOM TEETH
PULLED SINCE THEY WERE
CROWDING THE REST IN AN
UNAESTHETIC WAY.



WANTING TO GET IT OVER WITH AND FEELING CONFIDENT, I
FOLLOWED MY TRANSLATOR TO THE DENTAL CLINIC.



IT WAS
PACKED...

SHE DISAPPEARED INTO THE CROWD AND CAME
OUT WITH AN APPOINTMENT ON THE FIRST FLOOR.



AT THE DOOR, ANOTHER CROWD. ONLOOKERS WERE WATCHING PATIENTS GETTING TREATED INSIDE.



MY TRANSLATOR PUSHED ME, AND I FOUND MYSELF IN FRONT OF ONE OF THE STRANGEST SIGHTS I'D EVER SEEN.



I MUST HAVE BEEN WHITE AS A SHEET WHEN I TURNED TO MY TRANSLATOR TO SAY:



WHY DON'T WE COME BACK LATER? I'M NOT FEELING TOO GOOD...



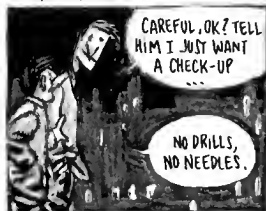
I WAS THE LAUGHING STOCK OF THE STUDIO...

AH, AH... AFRAID OF DENTIST?



I'M TRAUMATIZED FOR LIFE...

I DID GO BACK, BUT AT NIGHT WHEN THERE WERE FEWER PEOPLE AND WITH A FRIEND WHO SPOKE PERFECT CHINESE.

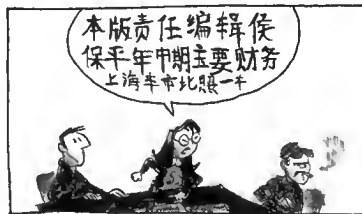
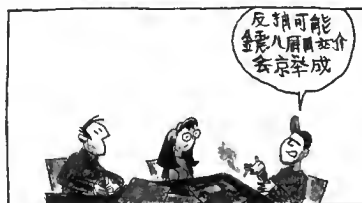
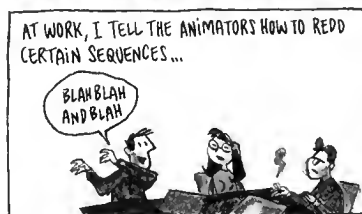


IN THE PROCESS, I'D LEARNED THE CHINESE WORD FOR WISDOM TOOTH AND THE MEANING OF MESIALIZATION: THE NATURAL FORWARD MOVEMENT OF THE TEETH.



LATER, I SAW WORSE AT A MARKET: A DENTIST WITH A PEDAL-OPERATED DRILL.





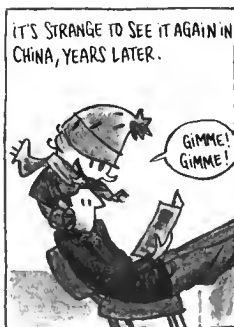


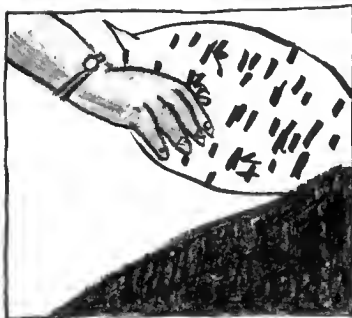
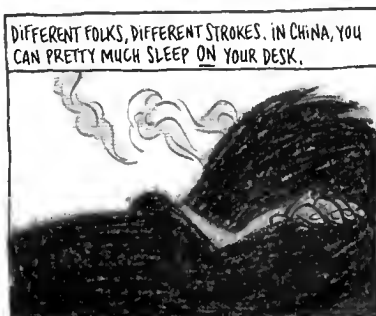
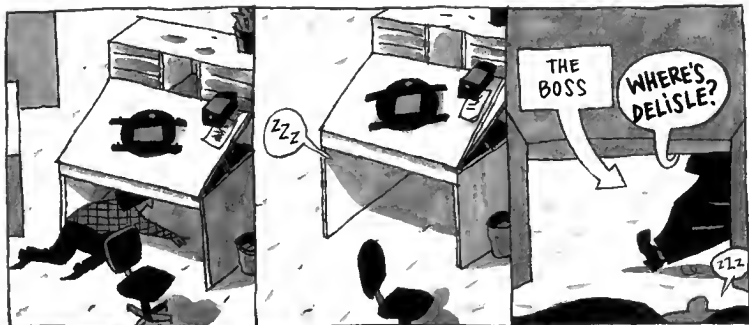
HALF THE ANIMATORS ARE
ASLEEP. I DON'T UNDER-
STAND HOW THEY CAN BE
SINCE WE'RE USUALLY OVER-
LOADED AND THE PLACE
SHOULD BE RUNNING FULL
TILT ...



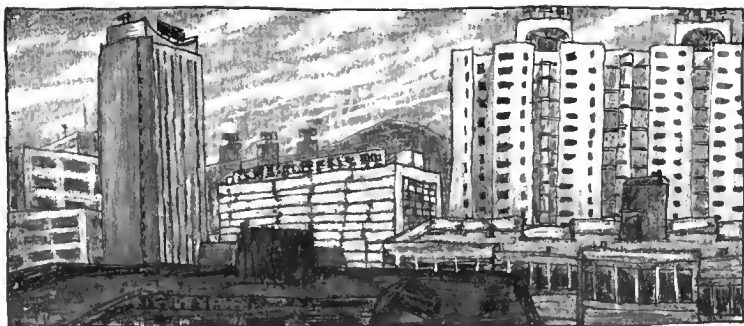
I SIT BACK AND WAIT, READING SPIROU COMICS
THAT MY EMPLOYER, DUPUIS-ANIMATION,
USED TO SEND TO THE FORMER DIRECTOR.











ONE DAY, I STEPPED INTO THE FIRST EATERY I CAME ACROSS. SINCE I COULD ALMOST MAKE MYSELF UNDERSTOOD, I ADOPTED IT FOR MOST OF MY STAY.



GETTING MY ORDER RIGHT INVOLVED A FEW STEPS...



FIRST, I TRIED THE SAME AS THE GUY NEXT TO ME. TOO SPICY... HICCUPS.



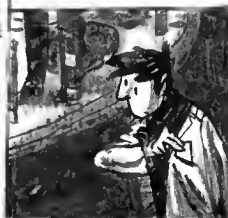
MADE A SPECTACLE OF MYSELF FOR THE OTHER DINERS.



MY SECOND TRY WAS BETTER.
I ASKED FOR THE NAME OF THE
DISH IN WRITING.



THREE TIMES A WEEK, SCRAP
OF PAPER IN HAND, I ATE THE
SAME DISH. WITHOUT HAVING
TO SAY A WORD.



HELLO!



TEA?



THANKS.



WHAT WOULD
YOU LIKE?



THE USUAL.



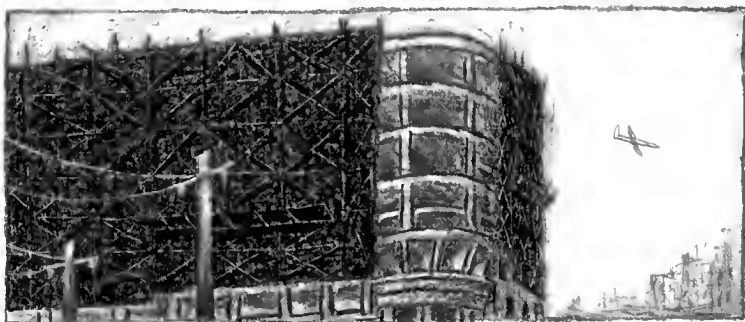
THE DISH WITH THE EGG?



EXACTLY.



ENJOY!



SOMETIMES I'D SEE THE
COOK IN THE STREET.
TO SAY HELLO, HE
WOULD DO THE SIGN
OF THE EGG DISH,
SMILING,



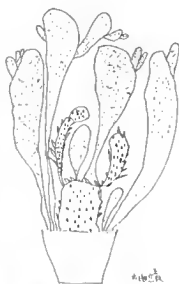
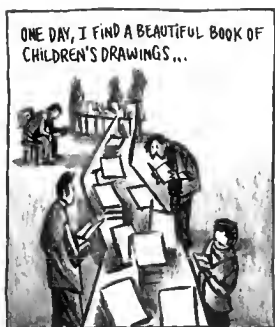


图46 爸爸的像 赵鑫 女6岁



LIKE I'D PLANNED BEFORE LEAVING, I TAKE NOTES ABOUT MY STAY. BUT THE ORIGINAL IDEA OF TURNING THEM INTO A COMIC SEEMS INCREASINGLY VAGUE.



I KEEP AT IT WITHOUT
REAL CONVICTION.
GOING IN CIRCLES IN
A HOTEL ROOM, EVEN IF
IT IS IN CHINA, DOESN'T
SEEM LIKE THE KIND OF
TRIP ANYBODY WOULD
WANT TO READ ABOUT.



BUT SINCE THERE'S NOTHING
ELSE TO DO, I WRITE
A PAGE EVERY
EVENING.



I TRY NOT TO FEEL
SORRY FOR MYSELF,
EVEN AFTER I
READ ABOUT
JOCHEN'S TRIP TO
NEW YORK.



IN THE WINDOW OF "HSP COW", A
COW WITH FLASHING EYES MOOS
IT'S HEAD MEMORABLY,
FROTHING AT THE MOUTH...



WE EAT CHICKEN WINGS,
LISTENING TO A LIVE DJ AND
WATCHING KUNG FU
VIDEOS.



AT "MAX FISH", THE MURALS AND
VIDEOS CHANGE WITH EVERY
EXHIBIT...

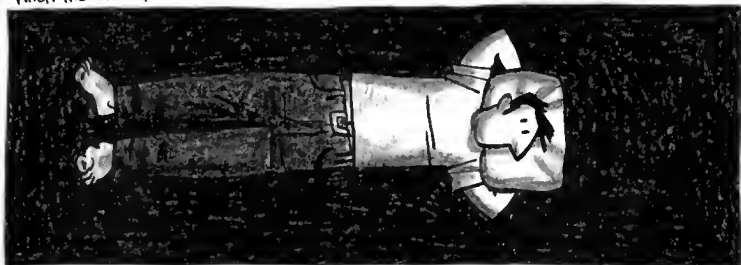
OH MAN...



IN MY LIFE AS A DOG, YOUNG INGEMAR PLAYS DOWN HIS BAD LUCK BY THINKING ABOUT LAÏKA, THE DOG SENT ON A ONE-WAY TRIP INTO ORBIT, DOOMED TO DRIFT THROUGH SPACE.



I THINK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE KIDNAPPED AND HELD CAPTIVE FOR NO REASON, NOT KNOWING WHEN THEY'LL BE RELEASED.



BEFORE LEAVING, I HAD READ AN ACCOUNT BY CHRISTOPHE ANDRÉ, WHO MANAGED TO ESCAPE TO AN EMBASSY AFTER BEING HELD HOSTAGE IN CHECHNYA FOR 111 DAYS. HE SPOKE OF THE SATISFACTION OF HAVING REGAINED HIS FREEDOM ALONE, INSTEAD OF BEING TRADED LIKE A COMMODITY. SURELY THE BEST WAY OUT, PSYCHOLOGICALLY.



IS IT BEING IN A COUNTRY LIKE CHINA THAT'S GOT ME THINKING ABOUT FREEDOM?

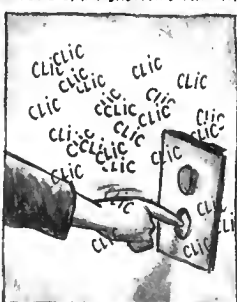
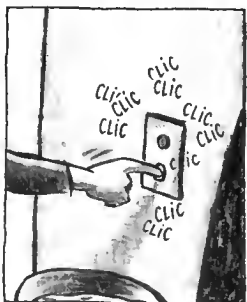
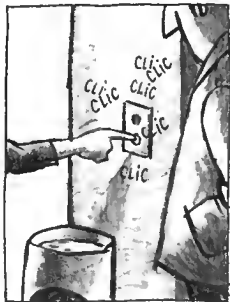
MORNINGS, WHEN THE FLOOR CLERK SEES ME LEAVE THE ROOM, SHE RUNS AHEAD TO CALL THE ELEVATOR. YOU'VE ONLY GOT TO PRESS THE BUTTON ONCE.



BUT SHE KEEPS PRESSING UNTIL THE ELEVATOR ARRIVES. SHE MUST THINK PURE DETERMINATION WILL MAKE IT COME FASTER.



I'D EXPLAIN MY POINT OF VIEW, BUT I DON'T SEE HOW WITH HAND SIGNALS. SO I STAND BACK AND WATCH.





THE DESCENT TO HELL, ACCORDING TO DANTE :

Paradiso
Purgatorio
Vestibule
The River Acheron
Limbo
The River Styx
City of Satah
Malebolge
Inferno

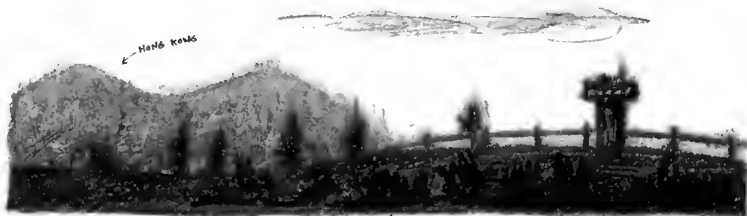
SAME THING, TRANSPosed TO CHINA :

U S A
HONG KONG
SHENZHEN
SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE
THE BIG CITIES
CANTON - BEIJING - SHANGHAI
THE COUNTRYSIDE

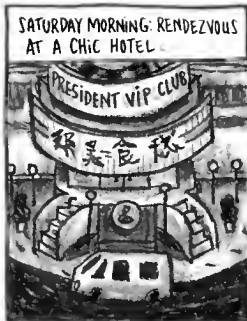
UNLESS YOU'RE AN ILLEGAL OR GETTING PAID UNDER THE TABLE, EACH STEP REQUIRES A VISA THAT'S HARD TO GET, SEEING THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE WANTS OUT.



TO THE NORTH FOR EXAMPLE, SHENZHEN IS SEALED OFF BY AN ELECTRIC FENCE GUARDED DAY AND NIGHT BY SOLDIERS IN WATCHTOWERS... I COULD SEE THEM CLEARLY FROM MY WINDOW.



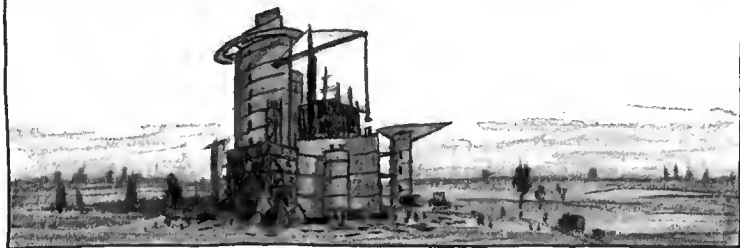
MY FIRST TIME THROUGH THE ELECTRIC ZONE CAME THANKS TO AN INVITATION FROM A STUDIO IN CANTON. A KIND OF BUSINESS TRIP TO SEE A NEW STUDIO STAFFED MOSTLY BY THE BEST OF OUR OWN FORMER ANIMATORS.



AND THEN 2 HOURS ON THE ROAD, HEADING NORTH.



IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, HUGE CONSTRUCTION SITES RISE OUT OF THE GROUND... GIGANTIC BUILDINGS LIKE CONVENTION CENTERS, BUT WITHOUT A SURROUNDING CITY.



CONSTRUCTION...EMPTY LOTS... CONSTRUCTION... IT GOES ON FOR HOURS. NOT MUCH MORE DEPRESSING THAN THE STRETCH OF HIGHWAY BETWEEN MONTREAL AND QUEBEC CITY.



EXCEPT BACK HOME, IT'S TREES ... EMPTY LOTS... TREES...

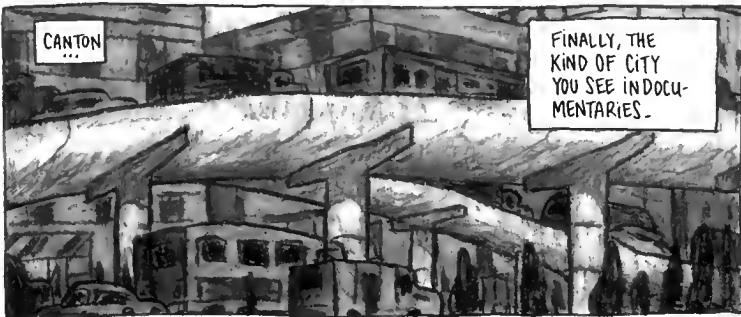


CROSSING A VIADUCT, I SEE A
MAN SQUATTING IN THAT
TYPICAL ASIAN WAY, QUIETLY
READING HIS NEWSPAPER
WHILE BALANCING ON THE
RAILING...



CANTON
...

FINALLY, THE
KIND OF CITY
YOU SEE IN DOCU-
MENTARIES...



FROM THE MOMENT I
ARRIVE, I'M TAKEN
CARE OF. A TRANSLATOR
JOINS US AND INTRO-
DUCE ME TO A LOT OF
PEOPLE.



AT THE HOLIDAY INN
RESTAURANT, I EAT
A DELICIOUS SNAKE
SOUP...



THE WAITER POURS FRUIT
TEA FROM AN ODD-
LOOKING TEAPOT.



THE HOTEL MANAGER
WELCOMES US BY
PRESENTING HIS
BUSINESS CARD.



IN CHINA, CARDS ARE
OFFERED WITH BOTH
HANDS...



AND RECEIVED
THE SAME
WAY
...



THEN, YOU'RE EXPECTED
TO SEEM INTER-
ESTED...

达涅于 广州代表
广州... 香港...
世界...
邮...
...



HMMM... FASCINATING.

THAT DAY, I TOUR
THE STUDIO (MUCH
NICER THAN THE
ONE IN SHENZHEN),
AM BROUGHT
BACK TO THE HOTEL
AND WANDER
AROUND.



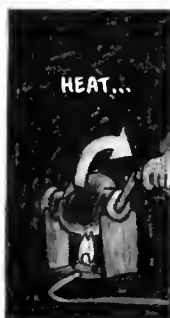
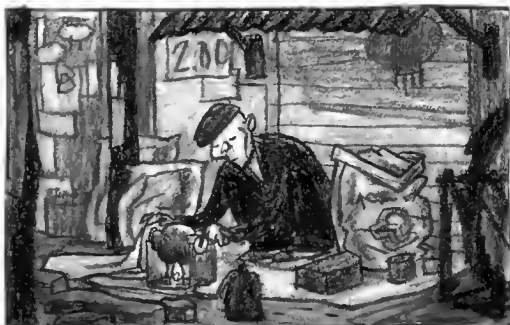
THERE ARE
LOTS OF
PEOPLE, BUT I
MANAGE TO
BLEND IN. AND
THAT'S SOME-
THING IN ITSELF.

THERE'S A LOT
TO SEE IN
CANTON: OLD
MARKETS,
PAGODAS,
MUSEUMS...



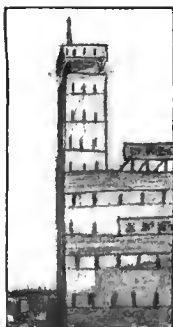
BUT ABOVE ALL,
OH JOY...
THERE ARE CA-
FÉS THAT SERVE
REAL COFFEE!

HERE, FOR AN EXOTIC
TOUCH, IS A LOOK AT
HOW OUR CHINESE
FRIENDS MAKE
POPCORN.



AND ENJOY!
YUM.





NEXT DAY, I VISIT A TELEVISION STATION, JOINED BY THE BOSS AND A FEW MANAGERS. AT SOME POINT, TALK TURNS TO SALARIES... I EXPLAIN THAT BACK HOME, TECHNICIANS LIKE THOSE WE JUST MET ARE PAID OVERTIME ON SUNDAYS.



GENERAL
HILARITY

I DON'T THINK
ANY JOKE I
TOLD DURING
MY STAY IN
CHINA GOT
A BIGGER
LAUGH.

AFTERWARD, IT'S
A TOUR OF THE
CITY WITH THE
TRANSLATOR
AND CHAUFFEUR.



MURRAY!



MY TRANSLATOR MUST HAVE
BEEN TOLD TO STICK WITH ME.
HE EVEN TAGS ALONG TO
THE SHITTER.



AFTER A WHILE, HE
PRETENDS TO TAKE A
LEAK...



OUR DRIVER (I WASN'T TOLD HIS
NAME) HAS A FACE MADE FOR THE
MOVIES. AN ASIAN BOGART.

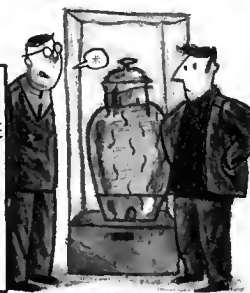


AT THE
MUSEUM, IT
SOUNDS LIKE
HE KNOWS
VOLUMES
ABOUT MING
VASES.



經許可，禁止右邊
8條自行車下馬路。
1.1米以下的兒
童1.4米的兒童乘騎
的遊客乘騎全數。

BUT MY TRANS-
LATOR, IN A
SHOW OF PASSIVE
RESISTANCE,
TRANSLATES
ONLY A
FRACTION OF
WHAT HE
SAYS.



THAT EVENING,
WE END UP
IN A PSEUDO-
KOREAN
RESTAURANT
...



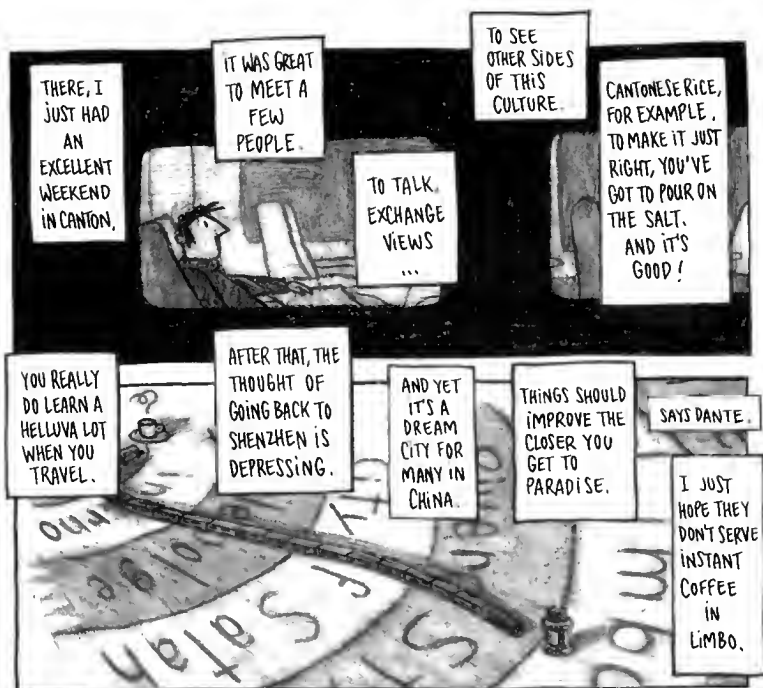
I HAVE NEVER
SEEN ANYONE,
ANYWHERE,
PUT AS MUCH
SALT ON
FOOD.

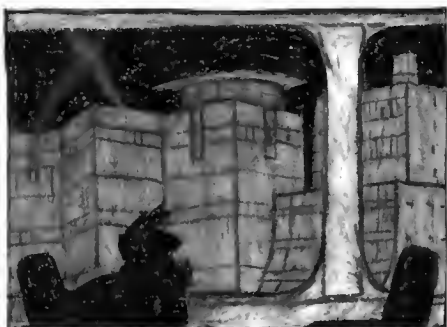
FASCINATED, I WATCH THE CHEF FRY UP RICE, CANTONESE STYLE, WITH SHRIMP, EGGS, SOY SAUCE, A BIT OF PEPPER



LATER, AFTER RACING AGAINST THE CLOCK THROUGH CANTONESE TRAFFIC, I MANAGE TO MAKE IT ONTO THE SHENZHEN EXPRESS, THANKS TO OLD BOGIE, THE DRIVER.







A YOUNG MAN COMES UP AND WE TRY TO CONVERSE.



FACING THE DOOR, THE HOSTESS GIVES A MILITARY SALUTE AS WE PULL INTO THE STATION.



PRETTY CLASSY,
ISN'T IT?

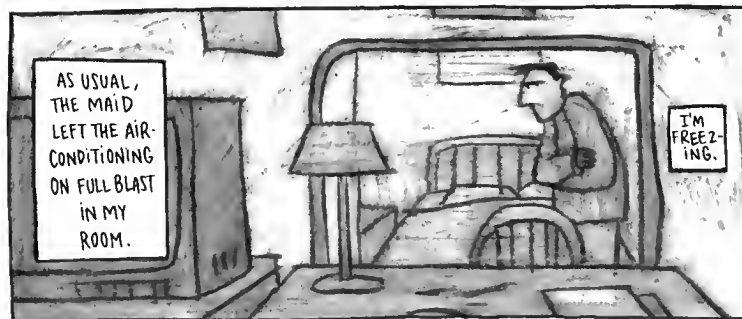


BACK AT THE
GREAT WALL
HOTEL.



WHAT
TIME
IS
IT?

HE'S STARTING
TO GET ON
MY NERVES.



AS USUAL,
THE MAID
LEFT THE AIR-
CONDITIONING
ON FULL BLAST
IN MY
ROOM.

I'M
FREEZ-
ING.

FEELING
A BIT FED
UP, I GIVE
THE THERMO-
STAT A
LITTLE KICK.



THANKS TO
MY OUT-
BURST, I
DISCOVER
THE HORRI-
BLE TRUTH...



I DON'T
BELIEVE IT!



A CAMERA!



I'VE BEEN UNDER SUR-
VEILLANCE ALL ALONG!...



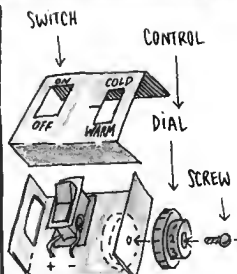
MUST BE THE KGB!

NO, NOT
AT
ALL.



THERE IS NO CAMERA...
AND BESIDES, THE KGB
IS SOVIET, NOT CHINESE.

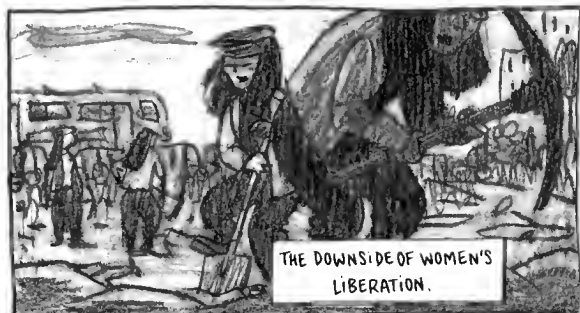
BUT I DISCOVER SOMETHING
ELSE: THE TEMPERATURE
CONTROL ON THE AC DOESN'T
CONTROL A THING. IT'S JUST
A PLASTIC DIAL HELD IN
PLACE BY A SCREW.

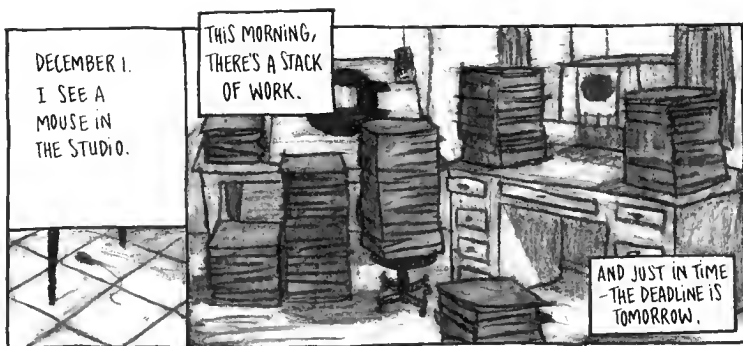


COLD AND WARM, MY ASS.



AT THE CORNER,
A GROUP OF
WOMEN REPAIR
THE STREET
WITH PICKS AND
SHOVELS.





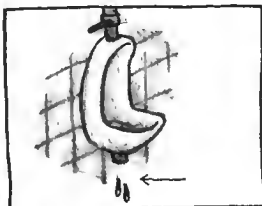
IT'S THE GOOD OLD
CHINESE METHOD: LET
THINGS PILE UP TILL
THE LAST MINUTE SO
THE EPISODE IS CHECKED
AND APPROVED IN A
RUSH.



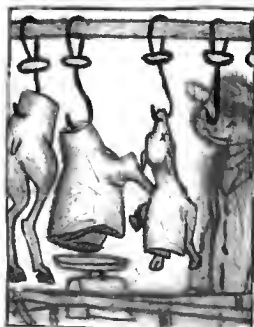
BUT SINCE I DON'T
PARTICULARLY WANT TO
WORK THEIR WAY, I
WALK OUT HALFWAY
THROUGH THE EVENING.



BEFORE LEAVING, I DISCOVER WHY
PEOPLE AT THE STUDIO USE ONLY
THE URINAL TO THE RIGHT.



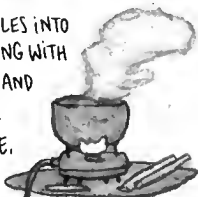
THAT EVENING, I MEET UP WITH CHEUN, MY FRIEND FROM THE TRAIN, AND WE GO EAT DOG AT A RESTAURANT I HAD FOUND.



I'M THRILLED TO HAVE A GUIDE AND HE'S HAPPY TO PRACTICE HIS ENGLISH.



WE DIP VEGETABLES INTO A BROTH BRIMMING WITH PIECES OF MEAT AND EAT THEM WITH MUSHROOM SAUCE.



THERE'S ALSO A KIND OF TOFU THAT LOOKS LIKE CELERY AND MELTS IN YOUR MOUTH.

DOG ISN'T BAD. IT TASTES GAMEY, A BIT LIKE MUTTON.



SUDDENLY, THE TABLE NEXT TO US CATCHES FIRE.



THE FLAME CRAWLS DANGEROUSLY DOWN THE RUBBER HOSE.



LUCKILY, A HEROIC WAITER TURNS OFF THE GAS IN TIME. WE DRINK TO OUR BRUSH WITH DEATH.





I PASS BY MANY ODD SHOPS
ON MY WAY TO WORK.



THERE ARE A FEW
THAT SELL SAFES
AND INSTANT
SOUPS.



WHICH SAYS A LOT ABOUT THE CONCERNS OF THE AVERAGE CUSTOMER.

A SAFE AND
TWO SOUPS,
PLEASE.



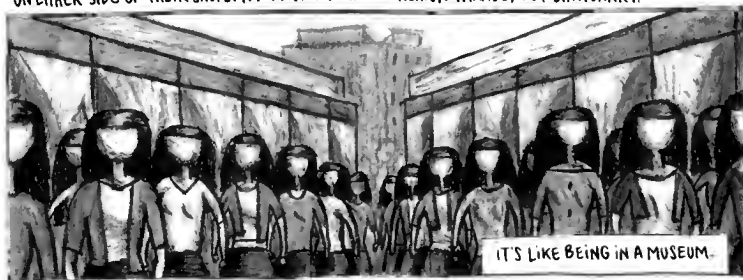
THEY'RE ALL GREEN WITH LITTLE
DECORATIONS IN THE CORNERS,
LUCKY LUKE STYLE.



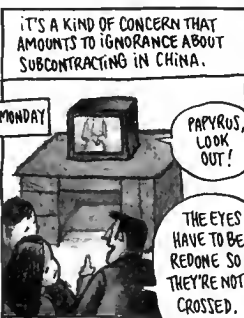
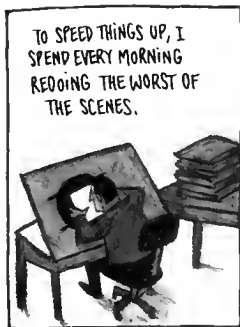
THERE'S ALSO A
SURREAL FASHION
ALLEY.



THE VENDORS DISPLAY THEIR COLLECTIONS ON THE SAME TWO MANNEQUINS, ALL PLACED THE SAME WAY
ON EITHER SIDE OF THEIR SHOPS. A KIND OF MILITARY FASHION PARADE, BUT STATIONARY.



IT'S LIKE BEING IN A MUSEUM.



YOU'D THINK THEY WOULDN'T
HAVE A PROBLEM DRAWING
ALMOND-SHAPED
EYES.



ESPECIALLY ONE OF THEM, A VERY
TALL MANCHURIAN WITH VERY
SLANTED EYES.



BUT EITHER HE FOUND THE WHOLE
THING HILARIOUS OR HE WAS
PLAYING ME FOR AN IDIOT.



HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA



王帝业斌该行保得自
宅金印勒火滔瑞水恩三



I DIDN'T
CATCH
THAT...



UH...
HE SAYS HE
WILL DO THE
EYES BETTER
NEXT TIME.

HMM.



CAN'T LET MYSELF
GET TOO PARA-
NOID IN THIS KIND
OF CONTEXT.



BASICALLY,
EVERYTHING
DEPENDS ON
THE STORYBOARD.



WHEN IT'S
A MESS,
ANYTHING
CAN HAPPEN.



THE BETTER
IT'S DRAWN,
THE BETTER
THE EPISODE...

EPISODE 16

-THETI TURNS TO LOOK FORWARD,
INTO POSE, STARTING TO OFF
SCREEN
-PAPYRUS GESTURE: TO OFF SCREEN,

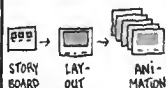
EPISODE 16 0:02:50 6:58:38 62

(REUT BG 116 SEARCE OUT FOCUS)

Tiya smiling Papyrus surprised

67 - RAOUSER (tired and out of breath)(OFF):
Oh, my aching bones...

TO CUT AN ADDI-
TIONAL JOB, THE
PRODUCTION TEAM
ASSIGNED LAYOUT
TO THE CHINESE.



RESULT:

THERE IS NO LAYOUT TEAM.
INSTEAD, ANIMATORS
WORK FROM PHOTOCOPY
ENLARGEMENTS OF
STORYBOARD PANELS.

WHICH IS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX
IN TERMS OF PRODUCTIVITY.

WHEN I CAME TO MONTPELLIER IN 1990, 3 STUDIOS THERE EMPLOYED ANIMATORS.



TEN YEARS LATER, ANIMATORS ARE VIRTUALLY OBSOLETE, AND LAYOUT HAS MET THE SAME FATE.

IT'S TOO BAD. ANIMATION USED TO BE
A NICE PROFESSION.



BECAUSE IF YOU CAN MASTER THE BASICS OF MOVEMENT,
YOUR OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY
THANKS TO YOUR BIONIC EYE.



REGULAR
EYE



ANIMATOR'S
EYE

WITH
30% MORE
RETINAL
PERSISTENCE!

TAKE AN ANIMATOR
IN A PARK...



PASSER-BY



PIGEON



LEAF



DOG



BIKE



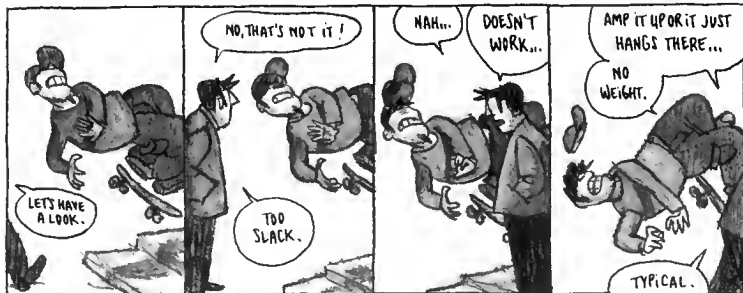
PASSER-BY



FLAG

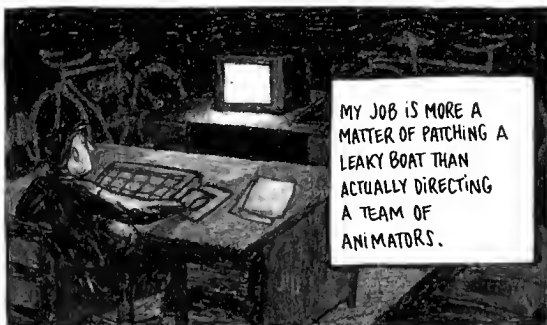
EVERYTHING
INVOLVING MOVE-
MENT TAKES
ON ADDED
SUBTLETY.

WITH PRACTICE, AN ANIMATOR CAN EVEN MAKE TIME STAND STILL FOR A MOMENT.



WITH SUB-CONTRACTING,
ANIMATION QUALITY
HAS TAKEN A HIT.

BUT SINCE THIS IS
A TV SERIES,
"IT'LL DO", AS
THEY SAY.



MY STOMACH
HURTS MUST BE
THE COFFEE.



CHINA HAS THE
UNFORTUNATE RE-
PUTATION OF BEING
THE FILTHIEST COUN-
TRY ON EARTH.

AH!...

STILL NO
WATER.



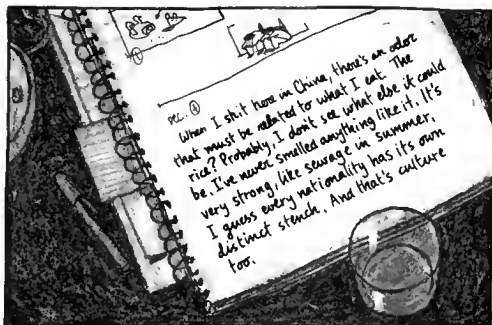
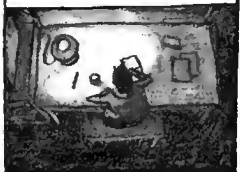
SPECTACULAR, BUT YOU
GET USED TO IT... IT
BECOMES NORMAL ...
EVEN THE SMELL THAT'S
SO REPULSIVE AT FIRST
TAKES ON SUBTLETIES
THAT YOU COME TO
APPRECIATE.



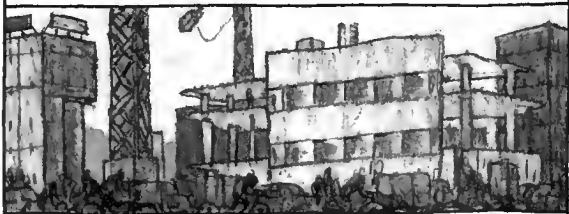
HHMM...

... VERY
COLORFUL
TODAY.

BACK AT THE HOTEL, THE DAY'S EVENTS INSPIRE A FEW THOUGHTS THAT I JOT DOWN BEFORE GOING TO BED.



THIS SATURDAY MORNING, I HAVE A SUDDEN URGE TO GET ON MY BIKE, MAKE MY WAY THROUGH THE CITY AND EXPLORE CHINA'S COUNTRYSIDE ... BASICALLY, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO DO.



AFTER A GOOD TWO HOURS OF HARD WORK, I'M BLOCKED BY A RAMP THAT MERGES WITH A HIGHWAY. I TURN AROUND.



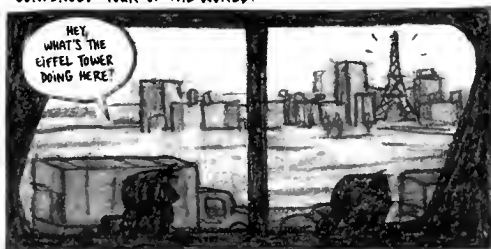
GREAT WEEKEND.



NEXT DAY, I VISIT THE CITY'S ONLY TOURIST ATTRACTION WITH CHEUN.



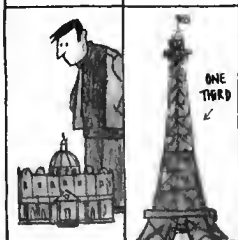
"WINDOWS OF THE WORLD", A THEME PARK OFFERING LOCALS A CONDENSED TOUR OF THE WORLD.



IT'S GOT ALL THE GREAT MONUMENTS.

BUT 19 TIMES SMALLER.

EXCEPT THE EIFFEL TOWER.



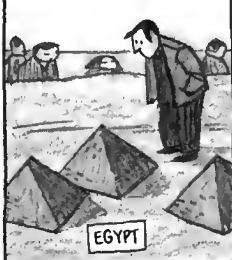
JONATHAN SWIFT WOULD HAVE LIKED THIS.



THE PONT DU GARD.



THE GREAT PYRAMIDS.



THE GRAND CANYON (PLASTIC).



IN AUSTRALIA, A GUY ASKS ME TO POSE FOR A PICTURE WITH HIS WIFE.



MY COMPANION SEEMS VERY PROUD OF THE SITUATION...



HER HUSBAND TELLS EVERYONE THAT I'M FRENCH.

THERE'S A DWÉLÉ DANCE PERFORMANCE IN THE AFRICA SECTION. I HURRY OVER. AFRICANS ARE RARE IN CHINA.



Turns out they're Chinese from the Northwest (less typically Asian), covered in shoe polish and goofing around like kids.



WOW...
THAT WAS WORTH THE TRIP...

DEFINITELY THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE DAY!



I SEE A RAT CRAWL OUT OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

AS WE NEAR THE CERAMIC REPLICA OF SOUTH SIDE MANHATTAN, MY GUIDE LIVENS UP...



I TELL HIM ABOUT MY RECENT STAY THERE. WHEN I DESCRIBE CHINATOWN, HE'S RIVETED, GASPING IN AMAZEMENT.



NEXT DOOR IS ANOTHER THEME PARK, "SPLENDID CHINA", DEDICATED TO THE COUNTRY'S OWN MARVELS.



CHEUN HAS NEVER SET FOOT THERE, EVEN THOUGH THIS IS HIS 5TH TIME AT "WINDOWS OF THE WORLD".



WILL YOU GO VISIT "SPLENDID CHINA" ONE DAY?

NO.



IT DOES LEAVE YOU WITH AN URGE TO TRAVEL...



I WOULDN'T MIND SEEING THE TAJ MAHAL ONE OF THESE DAYS...



WHEN I THINK THAT ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS BUY A TICKET...

I CAN GO WHERE I LIKE...



WE HARDLY EVER STOP TO NOTICE HOW AMAZINGLY FREE WE REALLY ARE.



I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING MY GUIDE ALONG
TO TRY A NEW RESTAURANT.

GOAT LUNG AU
POIVRE. A BIT
RUBBERY...



THOUSAND YEAR EGGS.
UNAPPETIZINGLY GREEN
BUT
DELICIOUS.

AND STEAMED BUNS...
THE HOUSE SPECIAL...



AT THE HOTEL, THE
DOORMAN'S ENGLISH
IS COMING ALONG.

HOW OLD
IS YOU?



SHENZHEN IS THE FASTEST GROWING CITY IN THE WORLD.

CRANES AS FAR
AS THE EYE
CAN SEE...

WORKERS
LABORING
DAY AND
NIGHT.

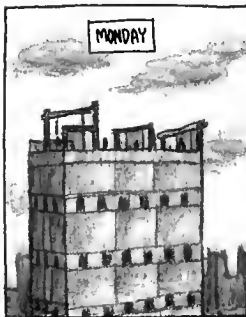
SOME BUILDINGS GO
UP AT THE RATE OF
ONE FLOOR A
DAY.



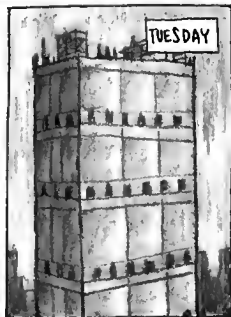
SUNDAY



MONDAY



TUESDAY



A DETAIL IN THE STREET REMINDS ME THAT CHRISTMAS ISN'T FAR OFF...



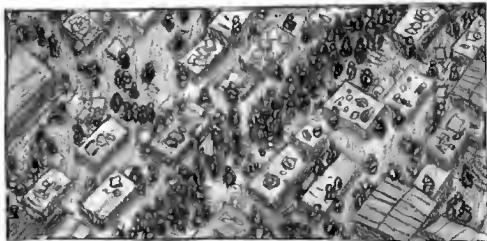
THAT DAY, GOING
BY THE MARKET,
I SAW ONE OF
THE MOST
INCREDIBLE
SIGHTS OF MY
TRIP...

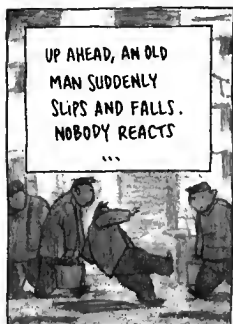


IN CHINA, WHEN A FISH
ISN'T FRESH, IT'S FLOATING
BELLY UP.



AT THE MARKETS, GARBAGE IS THROWN INTO THE CENTER OF THE AISLES.
IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY, PASSERSBY GRIND IT DOWN UNDERFOOT
UNTIL IT GRADUALLY TURNS TO MUSH.

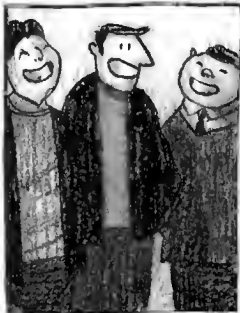
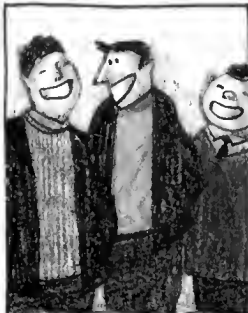
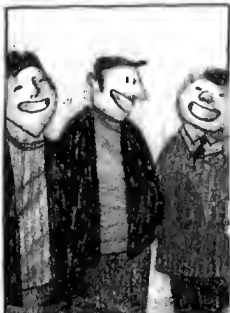




THE STUDIO IS ON THE 8TH FLOOR. THERE ARE TWO ELEVATORS, ONE OF WHICH IS ALWAYS BROKEN, SO IT OFTEN TAKES FOREVER...



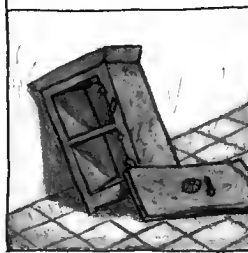
BEFORE LONG, THERE'S A CROWD. I KNOW MOST OF THE PEOPLE AND WORK WITH THEM EVERY DAY, BUT WITHOUT A TRANSLATOR, WE CAN'T COMMUNICATE.



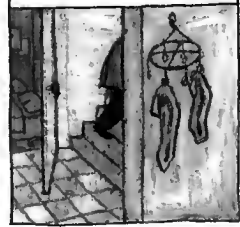
OR ELSE I TAKE THE STAIRS.



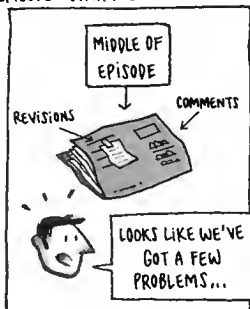
ON THE 5TH FLOOR, THERE'S AN EMPTY SAFE...



ON THE 7TH, A COUPLE LIVING IN A CLOSET-SIZED APARTMENT HANGS OUT MEAT TO DRY.



WE SHOULD BE WRAPPING UP AN EPISODE TODAY. THE FOLDERS ARE GETTING TATTERED.



THINGS ARE UNUSUALLY CALM. I FIND AN OLD COPY OF *THEODORE POUSSIN*,* IN WHICH A MYSTERIOUS CHARACTER RECITES A HAUNTING POEM BY BAUDELAIRE...



* COMIC BY FRANK LE GALL

BITTER THE KNOWLEDGE WE GET FROM TRAVELING! THE WORLD, MONOTONOUS AND MEAN TODAY, YESTERDAY, TOMORROW, ALWAYS, LETS US SEE OUR OWN IMAGE AN OASIS OF HORROR IN A DESERT OF BOREDOM.



THE PROJECT DIRECTOR I'VE BE-FRIENDED TELLS ME HE'S GOING IN FOR LUNG SURGERY...

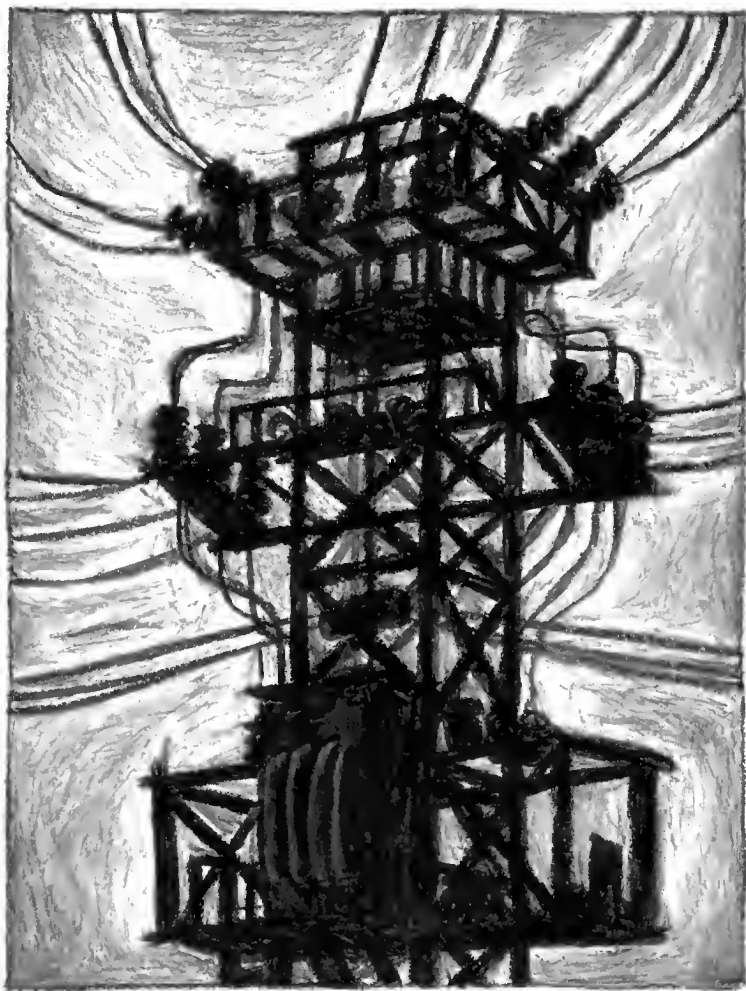


IN THE TWO WEEKS THAT HE'S GONE, NOBODY SEEMS TO WORRY ABOUT HIM...

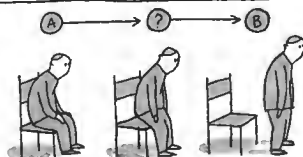


ONE DAY HE'S BACK, LOOKING DRAINED, WITH LONG SCARS ON HIS NECK.

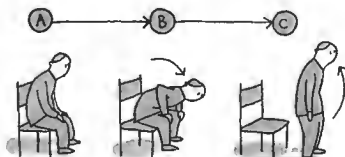




I WAS EXPLAINING TO AN ANIMATOR THAT IT'S PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET UP FROM A CHAIR THE WAY HE DREW IT.



YOU HAVE TO LEAN FORWARD AND SHIFT YOUR CENTER OF GRAVITY TO STAND UP NORMALLY.



I ENCOURAGED HIM TO GIVE IT A TRY...



HE DID AND...

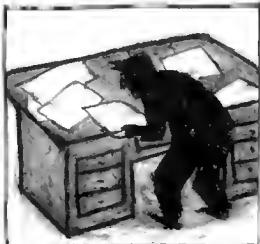


LATER, I REALIZED THAT HE'D KNOCKED OVER MY COFFEE...



HIS FOLDER WAS WORSE FOR THE WEAR.

I WIPED UP. THERE WAS STILL SOME UNDER THE GLASS, SO I SLID IN BLOT-
TING PAPER, THEN FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT.



INEVITABLY, MOLD DEVELOPED. I DIDN'T INTERFERE. DAY AFTER DAY, I ADMIRIED THE CHANGING PATTERNS.



LUNCHTIME. I WAS EATING LACQUERED DUCK WHEN A GIRL FROM ANIMATION RAN IN, HANDED ME A GIFT AND DISAPPEARED.



SHE REPEATED THE MANEUVER A SECOND TIME, PROBABLY HOPING FOR FEWER REVISIONS.



WHEN SHE SAW THAT SHE WASN'T GETTING ANYWHERE WITH BIG MACS, SHE TRIED PHOTO ALBUMS INSTEAD.



GIRL AND TREE
GIRL AND FOUNTAIN
GIRL AND TEMPLE
GIRL AND RESTAURANT
GIRL AND PALACE
GIRL AND CAR
GIRL AND MOUNTAIN
GIRL AND POOL





ALWAYS HER
FACE AGAINST
A VARIETY
OF BLURRY
BACKDROPS...



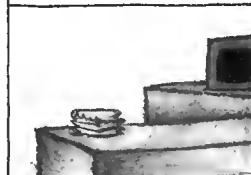
BUT NOTHING
REALLY
SEXY, UN-
FORTUNATELY
...



THERE WAS ALSO
AN ALBUM WITH
MORE CANDID
PHOTOS...



CLEARLY, MODESTY WASN'T
HER PROBLEM... I LEFT THE
ALBUMS WHERE I FOUND
THEM AND NEVER HEARD
ABOUT THEM AGAIN.



I HAD BEEN COM-
MUTING TO WORK BY
BIKE FOR A WHILE.

♪ ARISE YE WORKERS ♪



CYCLING, EVEN SLOWLY, IS
A REAL CHALLENGE.

TO MANAGE, YOU FIRST HAVE
TO PUT ASIDE ALL CULTU-
RALLY INGRAINED
POLITENESS.

A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES
APPLY...

FIRST
PRINCIPLE: AN EMPTY SPACE
MAY BE FILLED



WHICH MEANS PEOPLE CAN CUT
IN WHENEVER THEY LIKE.

SECOND
PRINCIPLE:

NOBODY ELSE
MATTERS...



ESPECIALLY OUTSIDE A 5-FOOT
RADIUS.

TRYING TO THINK
FURTHER AHEAD
IS USELESS.



WHERE'S
HE
GOING?



TO THE
LEFT.

RIGHT.

LEFT

WHAT
THE HELL
...

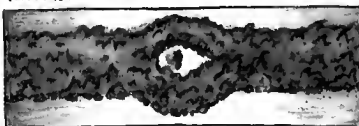


I TESTED THAT ONE A
FEW TIMES.

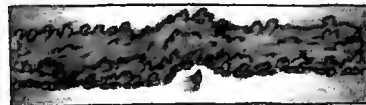
TO CROSS THE STREET: WAIT FOR A SMALL BREAK IN
THE FLOW AND INSERT A WHEEL ...



PROCEED WITH DETERMINATION... THE FLOW WILL
NOW MOVE OUT BEHIND YOU ...



TRAFFIC WILL MOVE OUT AHEAD OF YOU IN AN EFFORT
TO PUSH YOU BACK...



THE WORST IS OVER, YOU'RE DOING FINE.



BIKES ARE A SOLUTION THAT'S PERFECTLY
ADAPTED TO CITIES.



SUNNY DAY VERSION.

A STAY IN CHINA WOULD CONVINCE EVEN
THE DIE-HARD SKEPTIC.

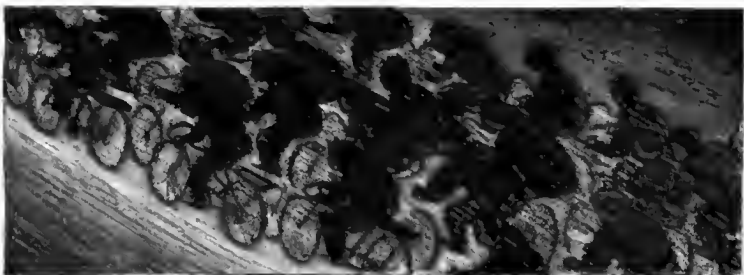


RAINY DAY VERSION.

BEFORE REACHING THE HOTEL, THE STREET SLOPES GENTLY FOR A HALF MILE. YOU CAN LET YOURSELF GO; NOBODY PEDALS.



THE VISUAL EFFECT IS DISTURBING SINCE WE'RE ALL STATIONARY BUT MOVING FORWARD.



I GET THE STRANGE IMPRESSION THAT THE STREET ITSELF IS MOVING. IT'S LIKE THE WORLD IS SPINNING UNDER OUR WHEELS WITHOUT MANAGING TO PULL US ALONG.





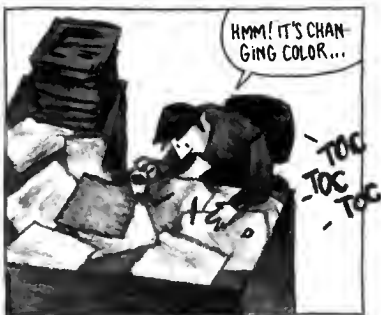
THE TV
PICKS UP
TWO KINDS
OF CHANNELS
...



IF YOU SEE SMILING
WORKERS TALKING TO
JOURNALISTS, IT'S THE
NATIONAL CHANNEL
...



IF YOU'VE GOT A SUPERMODEL AVOIDING
JOURNALISTS AS SHE WALKS DOWN
THE STEPS OF THE OPERA, A SWISS
WATCH ON HER WRIST, IT'S THE
HONG KONG CHANNEL.



ONE GUY AT THE STUDIO WAS
A LIVING CARICATURE OF THE
CHINESE STEREOTYPE,
GLASSES AND ALL.



AND SINCE HE REALLY WAS
SHORT, HE WORE HIS HAIR
STRAIGHT UP FOR THE EXTRA
HEIGHT.



ERASERHEAD STYLE.



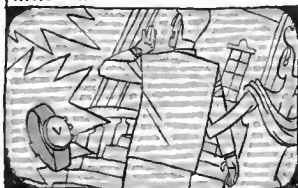
THE TV
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CHINESE STEREOTYPE,
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AND SINCE HE REALLY WAS
SHORT, HE WORE HIS HAIR
STRAIGHT UP FOR THE EXTRA
HEIGHT.



ERASERHEAD STYLE.





AT THE FRONT DESK, IT TAKES ALL OF FOUR
GIRLS, LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY, TO GET ME
SIGNED UP.



THE WEIGHT ROOM IS
FULL OF PEOPLE.
DAMN, I THOUGHT IT
WOULD BE QUIET. I
DON'T HAVE A CLUE
HOW TO USE THE
EQUIPMENT,
EVEN THOUGH I PEDAL
ALL DAY, I FALL BACK
ON THE BIKES FOR
CREDIBILITY.

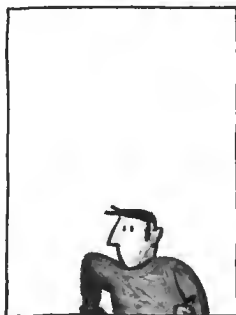


AFTER
WATCHING
CAREFULLY,
I TRY THE
TREADMILL

BUT I
CAN'T
GET IT
STARTED!



TO THE
RESCUE.



IT'S ALL
A BIT
SURREAL.

BEFORE LONG I'M TOTALLY EXHAUSTED, BUT I GET A SECOND WIND AND CONTINUE,



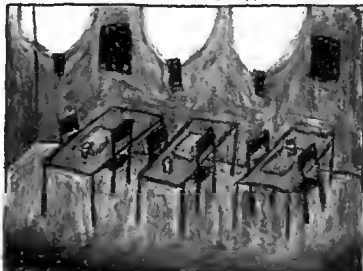
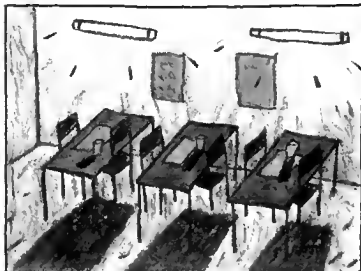
A BIT WILD-EYED, STARING INTENTLY AT A PLANT UP AHEAD THAT, AFTER A FEW



LONG MINUTES, SEEMS TO BE BOUNCING UP AND DOWN AT THE SAME PACE AS ME.



I FIND A TAIWANESE RESTAURANT BY THE GYM. UNLIKE MOST PLACES HERE, IT DOESN'T HAVE THOSE BLOODCURDLING FLUORESCENT LAMPS; THE LIGHTING IS SUBDUED.



THE SERVICE IS EXCELLENT TOO, AND IT COMES WITH A SMILE.



I GO BACK EVERY NIGHT FOR A WEEK.



I MEET A LOCAL WHO SPEAKS AN APPROXIMATION OF ENGLISH AND PREDICTABLY HANDS ME HIS BUSINESS CARD.



HIS GERMAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS IMPECCABLE - THE PRODUCT OF YEARS OF STUDY - BUT HE HAS NEVER MET A NATIVE SPEAKER.







IT'S LIKE A MOVIE WHERE YOU HEAR THE PROTAGONIST'S THOUGHTS IN VOICE-OVER.



I NOTICE THAT OLD EXPRESSIONS FROM BACK HOME HAVE STARTED CROPPING UP..





EVEN IF I LEAVE A MESS IN THE MORNING, WHEN I COME BACK, THE ROOM IS JUST LIKE IT WAS BEFORE.



THE WORST IS WHEN MY JEANS COME BACK FROM THE CLEANER'S WITH A CREASE.





I'VE INVITED MY TRANSLATOR
TO LUNCH AT A RESTAURANT
I NOTICED YESTERDAY.



THIS WAY I CAN TRY NEW RESTAURANTS WITHOUT THE KIND
OF NASTY SURPRISE I HAD LAST NIGHT:



TODAY I'M IN FOR A NICE SURPRISE: THE PLACE IS A KIND OF CAFETERIA WITH A COOK FOR EACH
SPECIALTY, AND I CAN ACTUALLY SEE THE FOOD BEFORE EATING IT. WONDERFUL! I COME BACK
OFTEN, AND SOON THE COOKS ALL KNOW ME.



NOODLES ARE MADE EVERY
DAY.



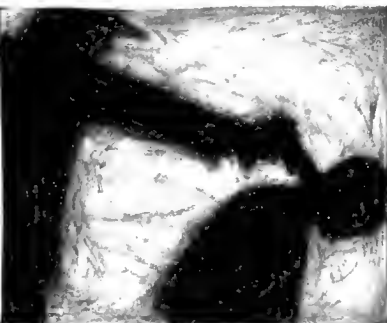


UP AHEAD, WE PASS BY A BILLBOARD I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT. I ASK HER WHAT IT SAYS.



I DON'T QUITE GRASP WHAT CRIMES THEY COMMITTED (THEFT? TRAFFICKING?) BUT I DO UNDERSTAND THAT THE ONES MARKED WITH A RED CROSS HAVE ALL BEEN EXECUTED.

ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL SOURCES, THERE WERE AN AVERAGE OF FIVE CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS A DAY IN 1997. THE REAL NUMBERS ARE PROBABLY MUCH HIGHER. THE EXACT NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS IS A STATE SECRET IN CHINA.



IT'S SAID THAT CHINESE AUTHORITIES ARE CYNICAL ENOUGH TO CHARGE FAMILIES THE PRICE OF THE BULLET USED FOR THE EXECUTION.



AS PREDICTED, AN ANIMATOR INVITES ME TO SUPPER AT THE END OF THE DAY...



LUCKILY, MY TRANSLATOR IS ALSO INVITED...



IT WAS EXCELLENT. AFTER THE MEAL, WE WERE SUPPOSED TO STOP BY THE "ENGLISH CORNER": A PLACE WHERE I WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET AND TALK WITH LOCALS.



I EVEN ASKED
THEM — RIGHT
FROM THE
START.

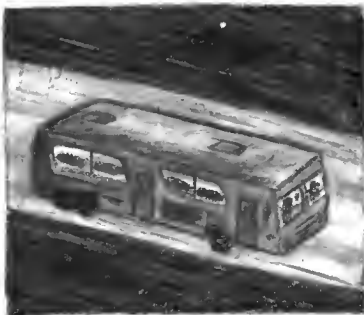
WE'RE OUT OF LUCK. IT'S SHUT.
I WENT BACK A FEW TIMES,
BUT IT WAS NEVER
OPEN.



FIRST THEY SAY
YES... THEN THEY TALK
IT OVER AND CHANGE
THEIR MINDS.



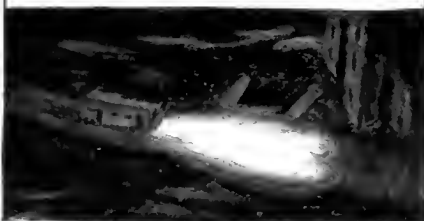
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A DRINK AT MR.
LIN THE ANIMATOR'S, INSTEAD...



THE TRANSLATOR HAD TO GO HOME,
SO WE'RE ON OUR OWN...



OUR JOURNEY IS NEVER-ENDING. WE'RE IN THE
OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY NOW. THERE ARE NO
STREETLIGHTS... YOU CAN'T SEE MUCH.



WE GET OFF IN THE
MIDDLE OF A
CONSTRUCTION SITE.



THERE'S A GROUP
OF BUILDINGS,
AND MANY PEOPLE.



HIS APARTMENT IS ON THE FIFTH FLOOR. ALL THE
DOORS HAVE BARS.



SAME HOMEY DETAIL
ON THE
WINDOWS.



THERE IS NO DECOR. THE HOSPITAL GREEN WALLS ARE NEON-LIT. IT'S TOTALLY BARE EXCEPT FOR A HUGE LEATHER SOFA FACING AN EQUALLY HUGE TELEVISION THAT HE TURNS ON THE MOMENT WE WALK IN.



A STRANGE POSTER IS TACKED OVER THE TV.

IT'S A PHOTOGRAPH OF A FRENCH-STYLE TABLE SETTING, WITH LITTLE PLATES NESTED IN BIGGER ONES, A PORCELAIN TUREEN, SILVER CUTLERY, ETC. — ALL THINGS YOU NEVER SEE HERE... IT MUST SEEM EXOTIC TO HIM.



THE COFFEE LOOKS DUBIOUS, BEING A GOOD HOST, HE MIGHT HAVE OVER-DONE IT.



MUDDY LUMPS FLOAT ON THE SURFACE.



APPREHENSIVE, I TRY A SIP. MY STOMACH CRAMPS UP IMMEDIATELY.



THE NEW AGE MUSIC PLAYING QUIETLY IN THE BACKGROUND HAS A SOOTHING EFFECT.



MIDWAY THROUGH THE VIDEO, HE REALIZES THAT I WON'T BE DRINKING HIS COFFEE.



BUT IT IS FOR HIM. HE STARTS CALLING HIS FRIENDS TO FIND SOME.



HE FINALLY GIVES UP.



HE SHOWS ME PICTURES HE PAINTED BACK WHEN HE TAUGHT FINE ARTS IN BEIJING.



WE TALK PAINTING, AND HE TELLS ME ABOUT AN ARTIST HE REALLY LIKES.

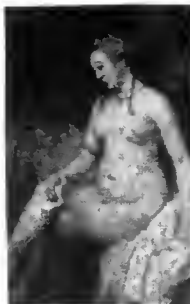


TURNS OUT HE MEANS REMBRANDT, BUT IN CHINESE IT DOESN'T SOUND THE SAME.

A LITTLE BLACK AND WHITE REPRODUCTION IN A CATALOGUE IS ALL HE HAS ON HIS FAVORITE PAINTER...



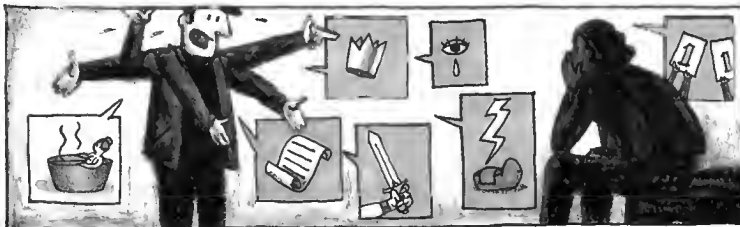
EVEN FOR A
FINE ARTS
PROFESSOR,
FINDING BOOKS
WITH FULL COLOR
REPRODUCTIONS
ISN'T EASY.



WITH CHRISTMAS SETTING THE MOOD, I
TELL HIM THE STORY DEPICTED IN HIS
FAVORITE PAINTING.



BEAUTIFUL BATHSHEBA HAS JUST STEPPED OUT OF HER BATH AND RECEIVED A MESSAGE
SUMMONING HER TO KING DAVID. HER GAZE IS AVERTED; SHE SEEMS LOST IN THOUGHT; SHE
LOOKS SAD BECAUSE SHE SENSES MISFORTUNE AHEAD... BUT NO ONE CAN REFUSE A KING.

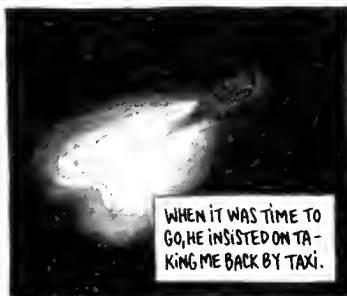


TO MARRY BATHSHEBA, DAVID SENDS HER HUSBAND TO DIE IN BATTLE, AND TO PUNISH THE KING,
YAHWEH CAUSES THEIR FIRST CHILD TO DIE ... THAT MAKES THEM EVEN.

IT'S ALWAYS
SURPRISING TO
SEE WHAT YOU CAN
GET ACROSS WITH
A DOZEN WORDS
AND LOTS OF
GESTICULATING.



AH! CHRISTMAS MAGIC!



WHEN IT WAS TIME TO
GO, HE INSISTED ON TA-
KING ME BACK BY TAXI.



ALL THAT
ATTENTION
FROM SOMEONE
I HARDLY
KNEW, JUST
SO I COULD
HAVE A
MERRY
CHRISTMAS,
WAS
TOUCHING.



I SAW HIM RUN
OFF TO CATCH A
BUS.



VERY
CHRISTMAS

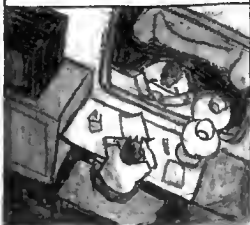


I WONDERED WHETHER THEY'D HAD SNOW BACK HOME FOR CHRISTMAS—I HOPED SO—
CHRISTMAS IS ALWAYS NICER WHEN IT SNOWS...

THIS WEEK CRAWLS
ALONG LIKE ALL
THE OTHERS.



EVENINGS, I DRAW. I HAVE
TO FINISH A STORY FOR
LAPIN NR. 17.*



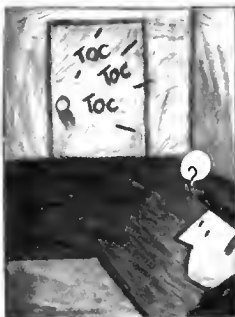
I'M USING REAL INDIA
INK FOR THE FIRST
TIME.



IT'S MUCH TOO
THICK. I CAN
HARDLY SQUEEZE
IT OUT.



STRANGER
STILL, IT'S
PERFUMED.



I CAN'T EVEN
ANSWER BE-
FORE SHE LETS
HERSELF IN
...



* FRENCH COMICS ANTHOLOGY PUBLISHED BY L'ASSOCIATION.

ONCE SHE CAME IN WHILE I WAS IN THE SHOWER.



ANOTHER TIME, I CAME BACK FOR SOME PAPERS I HAD FORGOTTEN.



IT'S LIKE THE WIRE ON MY CD PLAYER...



I FIGURED A MOUSE WAS RESPONSIBLE UNTIL I REALIZED THAT THE MAID HAD SINGED IT ON THE LIGHT BULB WHILE CLEANING.



I WONDER WHAT SHE THOUGHT OF THE LATEST PORTISHEAD CD.



I OFTEN WONDER WHAT THEY THINK IN GENERAL.

IN FACT...

NEAR SHENZHEN,
THERE'S A TOWN YOU
CAN GET TO BY BUS
THAT'S SUPPOSED TO
HAVE MANY FOREIGNERS.



THIS SATURDAY, I'M
DETERMINED TO GO.

I'D BEEN TOLD WHERE TO WAIT AND WHICH
BUS TO TAKE.



ON A SCRAP OF PAPER: MY DESTINATION IN CHINESE.



HERE, THE SUN IS A NUISANCE.



PEOPLE SHIELD THEMSELVES
LIKE IT'S RADIOACTIVE ...



ESPECIALLY
THE GIRLS.





AT LEAST
I'LL BE ABLE
TO COMMU-
NIMATE
THERE.

WHAT NOW? THERE'S NOTHING TO DO BUT WORK OUT AT THE GYM. I GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS, BUT MY HEART ISN'T IN IT: I CAN'T GET MOTIVATED.



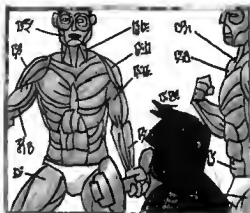
IT SEEMS SO
TOTALLY
POINTLESS...

ALL THIS SOPHISTICATED
EQUIPMENT TO WORK UP A
SWEAT IN MUSCLES I'LL
NEVER USE FOR ANY-
THING ELSE.

WITH ALL THE
MUSCLES IN
THE HUMAN
BODY...

I'M NOT DONE.

MAYBE I COULD PICK ONE
THAT NOBODY HAS EVER THOUGHT
OF DEVELOPING AND REALLY
FOCUS ON IT...



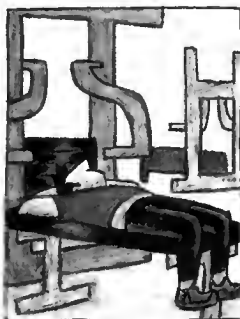
I KNOW: THE FUNNY BONE! WITH A BIT OF EXERCISE, IT MIGHT HURT LESS WHEN IT GETS BUMPED.



THEY SHOULD INVENT A MACHINE THAT WORKS ONLY THE FUNNY BONE.



AFTER TRAINING HARD FOR A FEW WEEKS, I COULD SHOW OFF AT CAFÉS.



IN THE LOCKER ROOM, I CHAT WITH AN AMERICAN WHO HAS BEEN WORKING HERE FOR A FEW MONTHS.



HE'S GOT TO BE THE ONLY MAN IN ALL OF CHINA WHO DOES AEROBICS.



WE END THE EVENING AT A RESTAURANT HE LIKES.





EVEN THOUGH HONG KONG, SINCE REUNIFICATION, IS ONCE AGAIN PART OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM, YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH PASSPORT CONTROLS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.



YOU THEN CROSS A NO-MAN'S LAND BY TRAIN FOR OVER AN HOUR TO GET TO THE FIRST SUBWAY STATION IN THE NEW TERRITORIES (NORTH OF HONG KONG).



EVERYTHING IS CLEAN, THE KIDS ARE HIP (THEY WEAR THEIR JEANS LIKE LUCKY LUKE), I CAN READ ALL THE ADS ON THE WALLS... IT'S REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK.



AND WONDER OF WONDERS,
I BLEND IN
UNNOTICED !



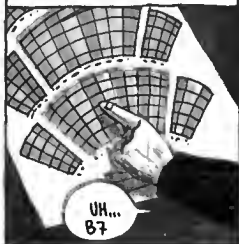
THE WEEKEND IS ALREADY
A TOTAL SUCCESS.



HONG KONG IS SOMETHING LIKE A TROPICAL NEW YORK. THE PACE HERE REMINDS ME OF WESTERN CITIES: THERE ARE CAFÉS, BOOKSHOPS, MOVIE THEATRES, ALL KINDS OF BOUTIQUES, A BOTANICAL GARDEN...



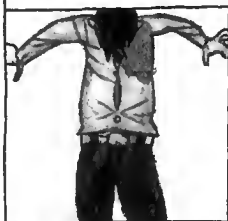
AT THE MOVIES, YOU
CHOOSE YOUR SEAT...



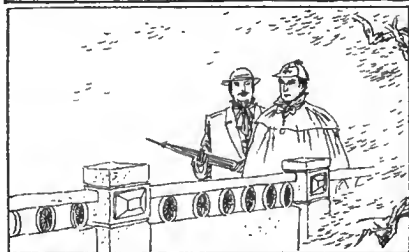
AT THE RECORD SHOP, I BUY A
PASCAL COMELADE CD THAT'S
PLAYING. HE'S HUGE HERE...



IN THE BOUTIQUES,
EVEN THE XL SHIRTS
ARE TOO TIGHT...

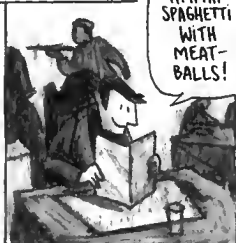


IN A BOOKSHOP, I FIND A SHERLOCK HOLMES
ADVENTURE SET IN A KIND OF SINO-LONDON.



IT'S GREAT TO BE
ABLE TO READ
THE MENU!

HMM...
SPAGHETTI
WITH
MEAT-
BALLS!



I STROLL AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE CITY, A BLISSFUL SMILE
STUCK TO MY FACE.



THERE ARE MANY TOURIST
ATTRACTIONS. I DECIDE
TO TAKE A RIDE ON THE
TRAM THAT GOES UP
TO THE ISLAND'S PEAK.



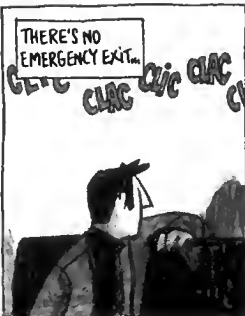
WE CLIMB
STEEPLY AT
ALMOST 45°!



IF IT BREAKS
DOWN, WE'RE
TOAST!

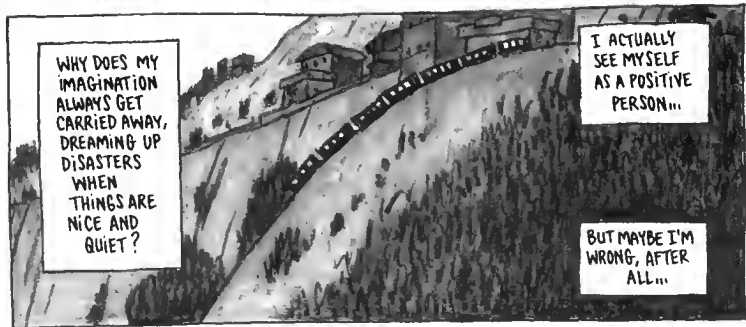
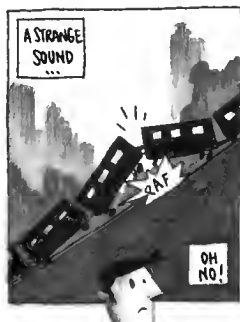


THERE'S NO
EMERGENCY EXIT...



AND THE WINDOWS
DON'T OPEN!





THE PEAK OFFERS GREAT PANORAMIC
VIEWS OF THE CITY.



THE PERFECT
PLACE TO BE
PHOTOGRAPHED.



THERE'S EVEN A GUY WHO DOES JUST THAT.



STRANGELY ENOUGH, HE HAS HIS CLIENTS
POSE AGAINST A BLUE BACKDROP.



HE THEN USES A COMPUTER TO OVERLAY A
PHOTO OF THE CITY, EVEN THOUGH IT'S
RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.



NOT QUITE REAL, NOT REALLY
FAKE. A SLIGHT DEVIATION FROM
REALITY. WHAT A CONCEPT!



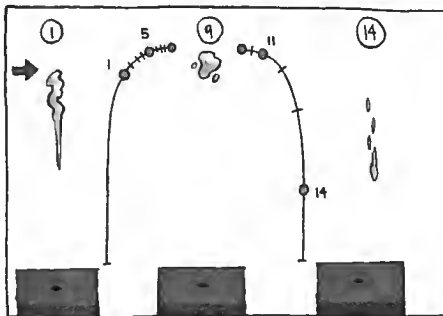
AT THE SUMMIT, THERE'S AN ENTERTAINING
FOUNTAIN THAT SPOUTS JETS OF WATER
IN A REGULAR RHYTHM.



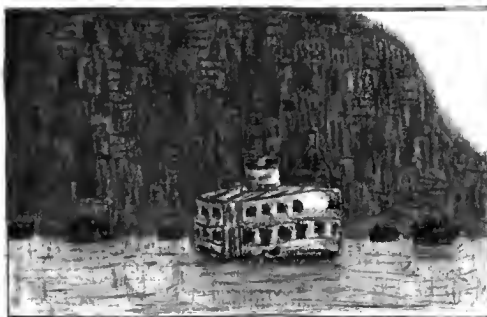
ANIMATOR'S REFLEX: I TRY TO BREAK DOWN
THE MESMERIZING MOVEMENT, WHICH
KEEPS REPEATING ITSELF ...



SURPRISINGLY,
GIVEN THE FORCE
OF THE WATER,
THE FIRST
KEY NEEDS
TO BE
LOCATED
NEAR THE
TOP OF THE
TRAJECTORY.



EVEN IF YOU WATCH CARE-
FULLY, YOU CAN'T SEE THE
WATER EMERGE FROM THE HOLE.



AFTER A NIGHT'S SLEEP, I GO DOWN TO THE PARK NEXT TO THE HOTEL. I FIND A BENCH NEAR A MAGNIFICENT CENTURY-OLD BANYAN TREE AND START TO DRAW IT...



UP AHEAD, ON ANOTHER BENCH, A MAN WITH A MIRROR USES NAIL CLIPPERS TO SHAVE THE FEW HAIRS ON HIS CHIN.



ON HONG KONG
ISLAND, THE
CONCEPT OF
YIN AND YANG
IS A PALPABLE
GEOGRAPHIC
FACT...



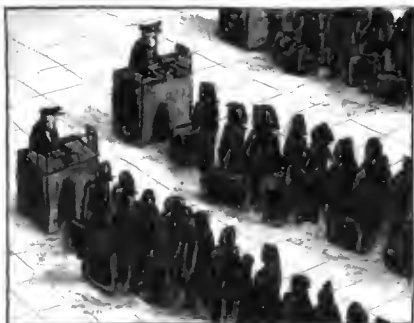
ONE SIDE IS FULL-OUT URBAN WITH ITS SKYSCRAPERS;
THE OTHER, TEN MINUTES BY BUS, HAS BEACHES WITH
SAND TO DIG YOUR TOES INTO.



MMM...
THE SOUND
OF WAVES

IF I COULD JUST
FORGET THAT I'M
GOING BACK TO
SHENZHEN IN
LESS THAN AN
HOUR, I MIGHT
EVEN BE ABLE
TO RELAX.





A YOUNG BUSINESSMAN BORROWS
A PEN TO FILL OUT HIS VISA
PAPERS.



AS HE GIVES IT BACK, THE PEN
SLIPS AND FALLS. HE PICKS IT
UP AND HANDS IT TO ME.



OOOPS!
SORRY!



THANK YOU!



SIX FINGERS!...HE
HAD SIX FINGERS!

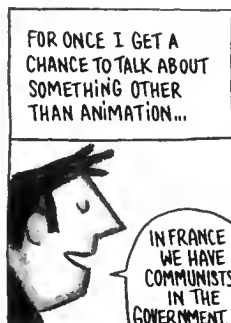
IT LOOKED LIKE A SECOND,
SMALLER THUMB, GRAFTED
ONTO THE FIRST.



COME TO THINK OF IT, BACK HOME YOU'D SAY A
CLUMSY PERSON IS ALL THUMBS...

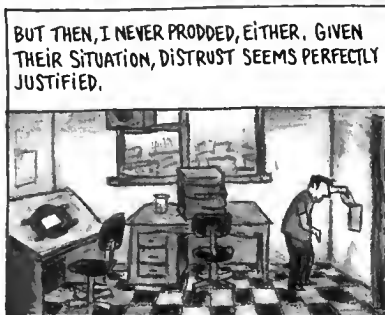
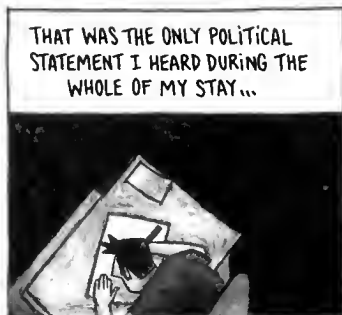




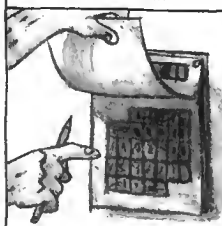


OF COURSE, HE RESPONDS BY LAUGHING ...

IN CHINA, LAUGHTER MASKS A VARIETY OF EMOTIONS THAT ARE DIFFICULT FOR FOREIGNERS TO INTERPRET.



AT THE RATE THAT WE'RE GOING, I DOUBT WE'LL BE ABLE TO WRAP UP THE SERIES BEFORE I LEAVE...



I'M HOPING THEY DON'T ASK ME TO STAY ON...

I RUN INTO MR. LIN AT THE HOT WATER DISPENSER AND GIVE HIM A BOOK ON REMBRANT I HAD BROUGHT BACK FROM MY WEEKEND IN HONG KONG...



HE SEEMS NEITHER SURPRISED NOR PLEASED. HE JUST SAYS:

THANK YOU!



...AND GETS BACK TO WORK.

NEXT DAY, HE REAPPEARS WITH A BOOK OF SKETCHES FOR ME BY A CHINESE ARTIST I HAD ADMIRRED AT HIS PLACE.



I ALSO GIVE AN ENGLISH NOVEL TO MY TRANSLATOR...

THANK YOU!



... SHE NEVER MENTIONS IT AGAIN.



I SPEND MOST OF MY EVENINGS READING,
WORKING OUT AND WANDERING THROUGH
SUPERMARKETS...



THEY'RE A NEW PHENOMENON HERE AND
VERY LUXURIOUS. I SHOP WITH THE
EMERGING BOURGEOISIE.



UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE
TOO MANY WESTERN PRODUCTS.



I DO SOME
RANDOM
TESTING.

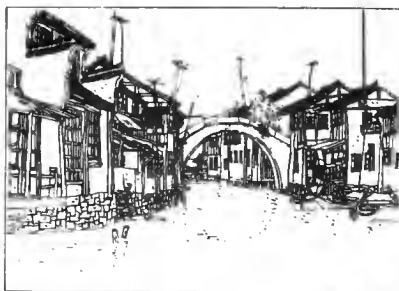
MMM...
THATSH
NUMMY!



I'LL
BUY MORE
TOMORROW

BESIDES WATCHING THE ADS ON LOCAL TV CHANNELS, IT'S
THE MOST EXOTIC THING TO DO HERE.

FOR A WHILE, I TOURED THE BOOK-
SHOPS LOOKING FOR ART BOOKS...
AND FOUND A FEW TREASURES
THAT HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE
ON MY SHELVES.



"TOWN DWELLINGS"

WANG CHI YUN



"IF I WERE THE DISTRICT MAYOR"

HU BUO ZHONG

THE SENSE OF COMPOSITION
IS AMAZING!... EVEN IF
YOU CAN'T READ THE TEXT,
YOU CAN FEEL THE
PRESSURE WEIGHING ON
THE GIRL.

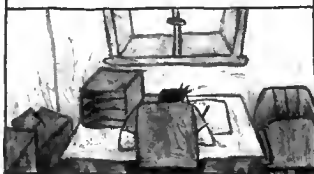


MMM, VERY NICE MOVEMENT...
TOO BAD YOU DON'T GET
GRAPHICS LIKE THESE IN
ANIMATION...

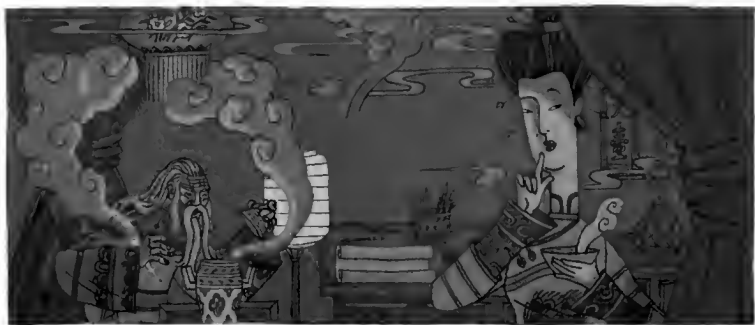


"HAI DEN, MASTER AND MONK"

THIS USE OF CLEAN LINE WAS A BIG
INSPIRATION ON MY FIRST TRIP TO
CHINA ... I EVEN DREW THE FIRST
PAGES OF A BOOK I WANTED TO
DO.



ANOTHER BOOK OF CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS



BUT I COULDN'T FIND A PUBLISHER, SO I
LET IT DROP.



SATUR-
DAY
?

YES,
SURE
...

OK
FINE.

CHEUN INVITES ME TO SPEND SATURDAY WITH
HIM AND HIS GIRLFRIEND, WHO STUDIES
ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BEIJING.



I MEANT TO GO BACK TO CANTON
BUT I'D RATHER STAY HERE
AND MEET PEOPLE, JUST TO
HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK.



HM.



AFTER THREE MONTHS OF
BODYBUILDING, MY STOMACH
ISN'T ANY FLATTER ...



IT'S JUST FIRMER,
THAT'S ALL.

I GUESS NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, SOME
BELLIES ARE MADE TO LAST.



I REMEMBER THIS GUY FROM IRELAND...



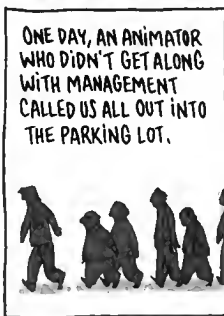
HE
HAD AN
AMAZING
GUT!



ON A CHART, WE'D CHECK OFF EVERY BEER WE TOOK FROM THE RESERVES.



AT MONTH'S END, THE ACCOUNTANT DEDUCTED THE TOTAL FROM OUR PAYCHECK...

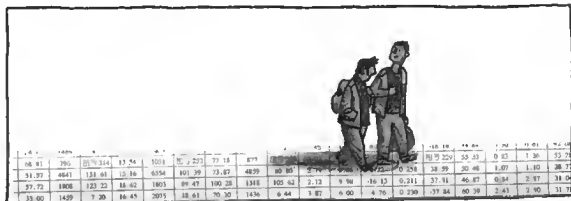




I MEET TOM
AS I LEAVE THE
GYM AND WE
GO FOR SUPPER.



LIKE ALL FOREIGNERS IN SHENZHEN, TOM WANTS TO CARVE OUT HIS OWN NICHE IN THE HUGE CHINESE MARKET. HE'S INTO E-COMMERCE AND THE INTERNET... IF HE MANAGES, HE'LL MAKE A FORTUNE.



WHILE HE PANS FOR GOLD IN THIS NEW KLONDIKE, HIS WIFE AND KIDS IN CALIFORNIA KEEP IN TOUCH BY E-MAIL.

TOM SPEAKS CHINESE, WHICH IS HANDY...



SO IF YOU DON'T SPEAK CHINESE, YOU
DON'T UNDERSTAND 'EM...
AND IF YOU DO SPEAK IT, YOU
STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND 'EM...



AT SOME POINT, HE'S TELLING ME WHY BIG MACS TASTE BETTER IN BIG CITIES THAN IN SMALL TOWNS.

TAKE CHICAGO...



BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS



HEY, SOMEBODY TOOK OUT THE ROTTING PAPER FROM UNDER THE GLASS...

TOO BAD ...

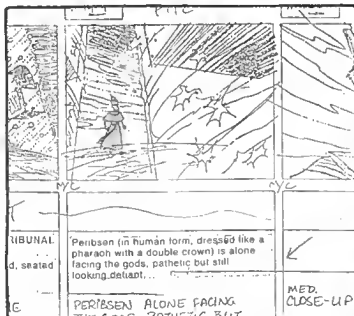


TODAY, THERE ARE ONLY TWO DECENT SEQUENCES; THE REST ARE BAD...



SOME DAYS ARE LIKE THAT.

BUT THEN A SCENE IN THE LATEST STORYBOARD CHEERS ME UP.



"PATHETIC BUT STILL LOOKING DEFIANT" HA HA HA! IT'S PAPYRUS MEETS BERGMAN! ... AND ALL THAT IN 50 IMAGES (2 SECONDS) USING A 12-FIELD FRAME. HA HA!



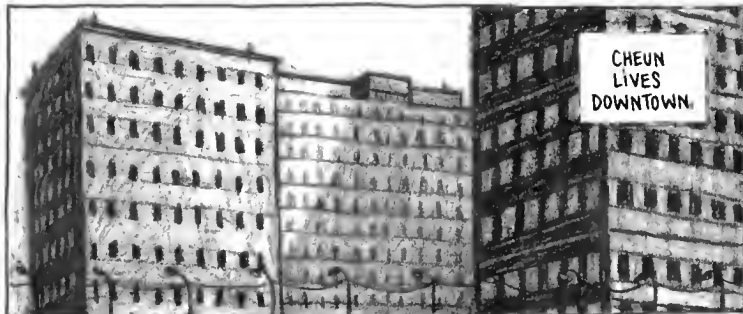
I GET A CALL
FROM PARIS.
THERE ARE TWO
EPISODES LEFT
TO SUPERVISE,
BUT THEY'LL
MANAGE BY FAX
AND PHONE. I
WON'T HAVE TO
EXTEND MY STAY!

OH...
OKAY.



HUH!

THOSE LAST TWO EPISODES
ARE GOING TO BE HELL.

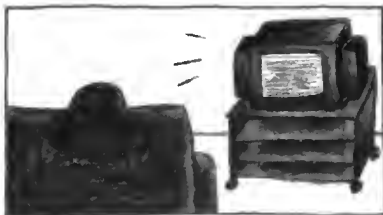


CHEUN
LIVES
DOWNTOWN.

THE FLAT
IS ON
LOAN
FROM HIS
COMPANY.



IT'S UNDECORATED; THE WALLS ARE ALL WHITE.
IN THE LIVING ROOM, A HUGE BLACK LEATHER
SOFA FACES A TV VCR WITH SPEAKERS.





PEOPLE JOIN US AND WE HAVE A LITTLE GAME. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I'M THE TALLEST PERSON ON THE COURT,



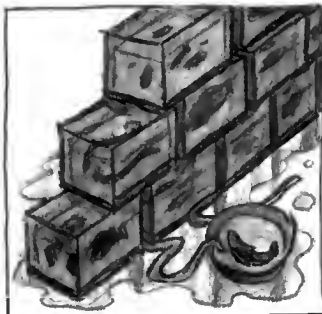
THEN BACK INSIDE FOR MORE TV WITH HIS MUTE GIRLFRIEND.



TO PLEASE ME, CHEUN WANTS TO TREAT ME TO WESTERN FOOD: STEAK, HAMBURGER, FRIES, ETC. ...



LUCKILY, I MANAGE TO REDIRECT HIS PLANS BY SAYING I WANT TO EAT FISH.



I'M INVITED TO DELIVER THE LAST RITES.

UH... LET'S SEE ... THAT ONE, THE BIG ONE!

AND THE ONE THAT'S TRYING TO HIDE THERE, TOO!



THE WAITER RETURNS WITH TWO GLASSES. THE FIRST HAS A BIT OF ALCOHOL MIXED WITH SNAKE BLOOD.



IT DOESN'T LOOK APPETIZING, BUT IT GOES DOWN.



"VERY APHRODISIAC," CHEUN TELLS ME.



* FRENCH EXPRESSION: "FAT LOT OF GOOD THAT'LL DO ME!"

A PIECE OF SNAKE ENTRAILS (THE BLADDER, I THINK) IS FLOATING IN THE SECOND GLASS.



CHEUN MASHES IT WITH HIS SPOON. A GREEN LIQUID LEAKS OUT, GIVING THE CONTENTS A NICE ABSINTHE COLOR.



THIS ONE IS VERY GOOD FOR THE CIRCULATION, I'M TOLD.



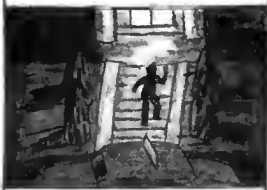
THE TASTE, THOUGH, IS REVOLTING. IT'S ONE OF THE FEW FOODS I DIDN'T ENJOY IN CHINA.



BUT EATING REMAINED THE BIGGEST PLEASURE OF MY STAY.



AFTER THE MEAL, THEY TAKE
ME BACK TO THE HOTEL.



HIS GIRLFRIEND HADN'T SAID
A DOZEN WORDS ALL NIGHT.

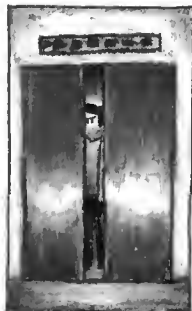


HEY! I
OPENED
THE DOOR
ON MY OWN!



IN THREE
MONTHS,
I'VE NEVER
TOUCHED
THAT
KNOB!

COLONIAL
REFLEXES KICK
IN AND I THINK:
"WHERE'S THE
DOORMAN? HE'S
NOT DOING
HIS JOB..."



ONE MORE WEEK...
IT'S TIME TO GO:
I'M PICKING
UP BAD HABITS.



THAT NIGHT,
WATCHING A
FRESHLY PIRATED
FILM PLAYING ON
THE HOTEL'S CLOSED
CIRCUIT TV, I
EAT A WHOLE
BAG OF SOUR-
TASTING SEEDS.

IT'S THE LATEST JAMES BOND.
THE FILM WAS TAPED IN A
MOVIE THEATRE USING A CAM-
CORDER... YOU CAN SEE THE HEADS
OF THE PEOPLE IN THE FRONT ROW
AND HEAR THEM LAUGHING.



AT ONE POINT, THE CAMERA
TILTS TO ONE SIDE.



NEXT DAY, MY LIPS
ARE SWOLLEN AND
MY TONGUE IS
TINGLING.



I THOUGHT I
WAS PROPERLY
PREPARED.



I HAD KEPT MY OLD TICKET, I
HAD CHECKED THE SCHEDULE.
I'D EVEN COME BACK TO FIND
THE WICKET FOR THE TRAIN
TO CANTON.



BUT TODAY,
IT'S SHUT.



OH
HELL.

I TRY TO GET INFORMATION
OUT OF A COP.

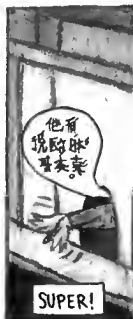


HE GIVES
ME VAGUE
DIRECTIONS...

THERE?
STRAIGHT AHEAD?
TO THE LEFT? WHERE?



I TRY ANOTHER
WICKET AT RANDOM...



WHERE?

THERE?

I DON'T SEE IT!



THIS IS ABSURD. ALL I WANTED
WAS TO SPEND MY LAST WEEK-
END IN CANTON.

THERE'S
SOMEBODY
WHO SEEMS
TO KNOW WHAT
HE'S DOING,



BINGO!



IN CANTON, I GET OUT AT THE
YOUTH HOSTEL.



IT'S GOT SINGLE ROOMS
THAT AREN'T EXPENSIVE.

ON THE DOOR, THE USUAL
RULES: THERE'S A \$6 FINE
FOR LIGHTING FIREWORKS
IN THE ROOM, AND
RADIOACTIVE WEAPONS
ARE NOT ALLOWED IN
THE HOSTEL.



HM.
ONLY
\$6...!
THAT'S
ALMOST
TEMPTING.

THE HOSTEL IS LOCATED IN THE FORMER EUROPEAN ENCLAVE. SET BACK FROM THE
CITY HUBBUB, IT'S THE PERFECT PLACE FOR A QUIET STROLL.



I'M QUICKLY
ACCOSED BY A
CHINESE STUDENT.



HE OFFERS TO JOIN ME SO
WE CAN GET TO KNOW
EACH OTHER. I'M NOT
SURE... HE SPEAKS ENGLISH
LIKE A SPANISH COW!



AFTER MUCH EFFORT,
I MANAGE TO GRASP
THAT HE'S STUDYING
ENGLISH AND LOOKING
FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO
PRACTICE.



AND YET HE HARDLY LISTENS TO
WHAT I SAY. I'VE BEEN
ANSWERING IN FRENCH
FOR A WHILE AND HE DOESN'T
SEEM TO NOTICE.



HE OFFERS TO
GIVE ME A
TOUR OF THE
CITY.



I SAY NO, POLITELY
AT FIRST...



BUT HE REFUSES TO GET THE
MESSAGE, SO I MAKE
MYSELF PERFECTLY
CLEAR...



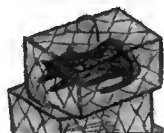
HE LEAVES ME
FOR ANOTHER
PASSING TOURIST.



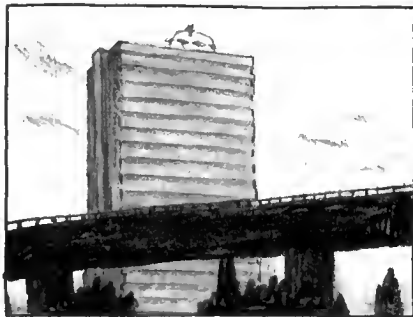
I COME ACROSS THE SACRÉ
CŒUR CATHEDRAL, LOST IN
A LABYRINTH OF ALLEYS...



THE MARKETS SELL
JUST ABOUT
EVERYTHING THAT
MOVES
...
CATS, FOR
INSTANCE



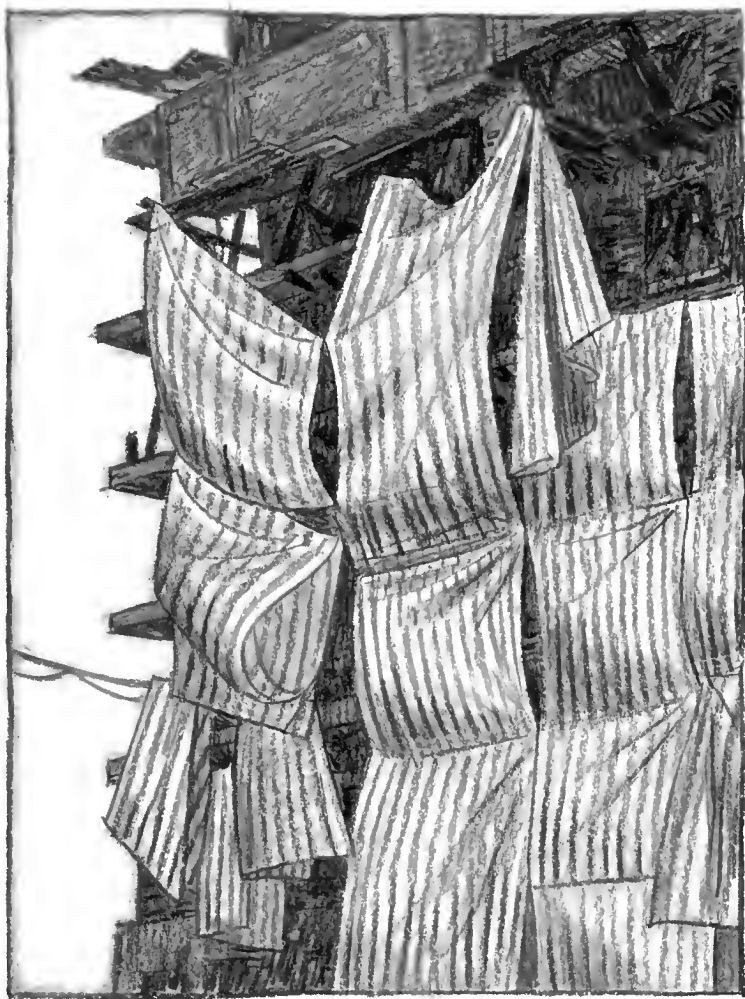
HA
HA
HA



PASSING BY A FANCY RESTAURANT, I SEE
AN OSTRICH IN THE KITCHEN.



HOW'S THE
OSTRICH... IS
IT FRESH?



I LOOK (UNSUCCESSFULLY) BEHIND THE FRIENDSHIP STORE FOR A CHRISTIAN CEMETERY,
THE SUPPOSED BURIAL SITE OF A NUMBER OF GIRLS KILLED BY CANADIAN NUNS.



PROPAGANDA? I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE INOFFENSIVE THAN A CANADIAN NUN.



IN THE PUBLIC TOILETS, THE MOOD IS CONTEMPLATIVE.



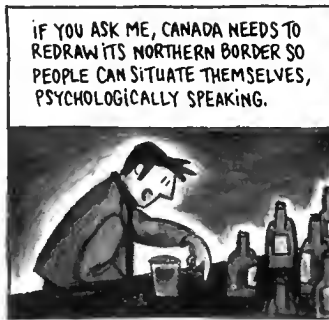
BY WAY OF AN ALTAR,
THERE'S A SINK. I
CLEANSE MY HANDS.







HUDSON BAY? THE NORTH WEST TERRITORIES? THE ARCTIC CIRCLE? BAFFIN ISLAND? AFTER THAT, IT'S ALL ICE. YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL IF THERE'S GROUND UNDERFOOT!





I HEAD BACK,
PRETTY LIT, AND
STOP FOR A LONG
TIME TO ADMIRE
THE BANYANS THAT
LINE THE STREET,
BLENDING INTO THE
WARM EVENING
HAZE IN THE
DISTANCE.





IF ONLY THE
STUDIO HAD BEEN
IN CANTON,
MY STAY WOULD
HAVE BEEN A
WHOLE OTHER
STORY. IT'S A
CITY I THINK
I COULD HAVE
GROWN
ATTACHED TO.



TODAY, THE BOSS IS
INVITING ME OUT
TO LUNCH. HE'S
LEAVING FOR THE WEEK
AND WANTS TO THANK
ME FOR MY WORK.



HE'S A TALL MAN, QUITE ELEGANT.
HE GETS ALONG WELL WITH HIS
EMPLOYEES EVEN THOUGH, TO HEAR
THEM TELL IT, HE'S A LOUSY
MANAGER.



BUT HE MUST BE ENTERTAIN-
ING. PEOPLE LISTEN WHEN
HE TALKS AND LAUGHTER
REGULARLY BREAKS OUT
AROUND HIM.



NEEDLESS TO
SAY, I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
A WORD...
I CAN ONLY
GRASP THE
FORM: THE
RHYTHM,
INTONATION,
PAUSES,
ETC...



AND STRANGELY ENOUGH,
I'M JUST ABOUT LAUGHING
MYSELF.



IT'S A PLEASURE TO HEAR HIM TELL A STORY: THE RISING TENSION, THE PERFECTLY TIMED SILENCE THAT LEAVES THE LISTENER HANGING AND THE PUNCH LINE THAT DROPS CLEAN



DESPITE THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES THAT SEPARATE EAST AND WEST, I THINK WE SHARE THE SAME NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES WHEN IT COMES TO SPOKEN LANGUAGE.



THAT MAKES
ONE THING WE
HAVE IN COMMON.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHINESE HUMOR, I CONVINCE AN ANIMATOR TO TELL ME A JOKE ...



A
WEALTHY
MANDARIN THREW
A PARTY AND
BOASTED THAT HE
COULD GIVE HIS
GUESTS
EVERYTHING
BUT THE
MOON.

SUDDENLY A
SERVANT CAME IN
TO SAY THERE WASN'T
ENOUGH WOOD FOR
THE FIRE.



AND SO THE
MANDARIN SAID:
"EVERYTHING BUT
THE MOON AND
FIREWOOD."





PUSH THE SIMILARITY TO THE EXTREME IN ORDER TO GET TWO DAYS THAT ARE PERFECTLY IDENTICAL.



THE GOAL IS TO SEE IF IDENTICAL CONTEXTS PRODUCE IDENTICAL THOUGHTS.



ARTISTS WHO INK THEIR OWN PENCILS KNOW THE FEELING...



GOING OVER THE SAME LINES, THE SAME THOUGHTS RESURFACE.



IN THE END, IT DOESN'T WORK...

THOUGHTS JUST AREN'T THAT EASY TO KEEP UNDER CONTROL.



IT FIGURES ... OH WELL. AT LEAST THAT MAKES ONE DAY LESS LEFT TO GO.

MORNINGS, I WALK ALONG A STREET WHERE PEOPLE LAY OUT THEIR DIPLOMAS, WAITING FOR JOB OFFERS.



EVENINGS, THEY'RE OFTEN REPLACED BY A BARBER WHO GIVES WORKERS FROM A CONSTRUCTION SITE NEXT DOOR A TRIM, ONE AFTER THE OTHER.



THE POWER IS OUT AT THE GYM. THE CLIENTS LEAVE, DISAPPOINTED...



I INSIST ON GOING UP. IT'S STILL LIGHT OUT
AND AFTER ALL, THE MACHINES WORK ON
MUSCLE POWER...



IN THE LOCKER ROOM, I COME ACROSS
A STRANGELY SHAPED OLD MAN.



JUST LIKE A RING CAN DEFORM A
FINGER WITH TIME, HIS BELT SEEMS
TO HAVE DUG A HOLLOW INTO HIS
WAIST OVER THE YEARS.



MAKES YOU WONDER IF
WE ADJUST TO OUR
CLOTHES MORE THAN
THEY DO TO US.



I'M ON MY OWN,
AND IT'S NOT
UNPLEASANT.
ESPECIALLY
SINCE I DON'T
HAVE TO LISTEN
TO WHITNEY
HOUSTON YOWL
THROUGH THE SPEA-
KERS IN A NEVER-
ENDING LOOP...





NIGHT FALLS SLOWLY, AND THE GUY WHO USUALLY MANAGES THE JUICE BAR SETS OUT DOZENS OF CANDLES IN THE GYM.



AND TO ADD TO THE MAGIC OF THIS UNFORGETTABLE MOMENT, I HEAR HIM IN A ROOM NEXT DOOR, SINGING A LITING SONG THAT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S OUT OF A FAIRYTALE.



THE LAST DAY IS QUIET.
THERE'S NOT MUCH TO
DO.



AND LIKE EVERY FRIDAY,
MY TRANSLATOR COMES
TO ASK:



YOU COME
TO WORK
TOMORROW?



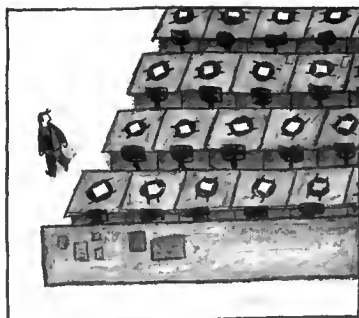
BUT ON HER WAY OUT,
SHE LEAVES A WAIST-
HIGH PILE OF SEQUENCES
FOR ME TO CHECK.

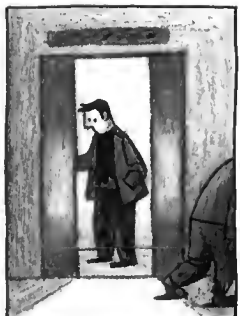
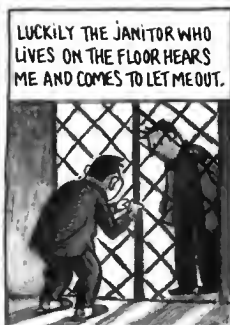


I
WORK
INTO THE
NIGHT.



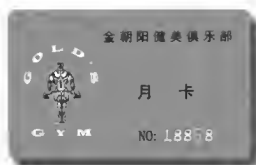
WHEN I'M
DONE, THE
STUDIO IS
EMPTY.







DELISLE.



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Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea (2005)

Aline and Albert (2006)





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